

News from Houston N'Crowd



THE ORDERBOARD

January/February 2018



We did it again: We ate, drank and were merry at the N'Crowd's annual holiday party and combat gift exchange, hosted this year by Samuel and Charleen Townsel. See pages 3 and 4 for more photos.



Inside:

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- PVs

"GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

by Tom Marsh, President

Our 40th Anniversary Year

Happy New Year!

2018 marks the 40th anniversary of the founding of the N'Crowd Model Railroad Society, aka Houston N'Crowd. March 15 is the specific anniversary, as on that date in 1978 our group gathered for the first time.

The rest is history, as they say, and in that vein we will have an updated N'Crowd history in the next issue of *The Orderboard*. The original, published in the May/June 2013 *Orderboard*, was prepared by members Gordon Bliss and Al Hague, and I have asked them to give us an update.

Anniversary shirts in the works

Samples of our short sleeve polo shirts with the N'Crowd 40th Anniversary logo have been ordered and we will begin taking orders at the January 17 membership meeting. The polo shirts are essentially the same as we have purchased in the past, royal blue with a pocket and embroidered logo. The price is \$28 each.

We've also ordered samples of BC&G Railroad safety green t-shirts for when you are working on the railroad, either yours or ours! These cost \$12 each.

See the order form that accompanies this issue for more information on both shirts.

40th Anniversary events

Most of you will have seen my email to members concerning possible activities in our anniversary year. These include:

- Car pool trips to various locations, including Houston Area Live Steamers at Zube Park, Galveston Railroad Museum, Rosenberg Railroad Museum and Tomball Depot Museum;

- Motor coach trip to New Braunfels Train Show, New Braunfels Railroad Museum and Flatonia Railfan Photo Pavilion (Saturday, April 14 or Sunday, April 15);

- Motor coach trip to Cedar Park to ride the ASTA excursion train and a visit to the Elgin Depot Museum (flexible date);

- Lunch on Amtrak's *Sunset Limited*: Motor coach to Lake Charles, La. for a visit with the founder of the "Train Busters Club", then on to Lafayette to board the *Sunset Limited* to return to Houston (flexible date).

Since the earlier email, we've had a few other suggestions, including a weekend trip to New Orleans (motor coach over Saturday, Amtrak return Sunday). We'll have some estimated costs for these trips and be asking for input on these and other ideas at our January 17 membership meeting, so we hope to see you there!

Thank you!

Thanks to Past President Samuel Townsel, his wife Charleen and their little ones for hosting the N'Crowd's 2017 holiday bash. Thanks also to everyone who brought side dishes. It was a fun, filling time!

And you!

We had great support running the layout during the holiday season, and thanks goes out to everyone who volunteered their time to entertain Papa Ben's Train Place customers and guests between Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve. We easily met our obligation to the store to have trains running every Saturday and Sunday during the holiday season. Be sure to visit the BC&G on Saturdays during 2018. See you there!

Tom



N'Crowd Wednesday Membership Meetings:

January 17 / February 21 / March 21 / April 18 / May 16

N'Crowd **Operating Sessions**: First Sunday of even-numbered months. Watch your email for information.

Most activities take place at Papa Ben's Train Place, 4007-E Bellaire Blvd. Our monthly membership meetings start at 7 p.m. and are open to all. Operating sessions take place at various locations.

Party time... and combat gift exchange, too

N'Crowd members gathered December 16 to celebrate the holidays at the home of Samuel and Charleen Townsel. We had a jolly crowd, as the photos show, and a relatively sedate combat gift exchange that seemed to leave everyone happy. If you missed it, we hope to see you next year!



Above, some assembly required: It's a planter in the form of a steam locomotive.

Right, model railroading fun is a box of trees! Of course, someone stole them in a later round.

Below, you never know what or who is lurking in the train room.



Houston N'Crowd 2018 Officers and Volunteers

President Tom Marsh
 Vice President Richard Bartlett
 Secretary James C. Senneff, Jr.
 Treasurer Eddie Aycock
 Board Member (2018) Joe Kingsberry

Board Member (2019) Allan Melton
 Board Member (2020) Samuel Townsell II
 Layout Master Joe Kingsberry
 Editor & Webmaster Tom Marsh



During the party, Samuel showed off recent progress on his Ark-La-Tex Line. The double-deck layout will represent modern rail operations in Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas with locations ranging from Houston to Lake Charles, La. and North Little Rock, Ark. To facilitate planned operating sessions, the layout will incorporate two staging yards.



She seemed a little peeved

by Tom Marsh

As model railroaders, I think we sometimes lose sight of the fact that real railroads are run by real engineers, conductors, dispatchers and many more. The little plastic people that populate our railroads don't have to

deal with the day-to-day issues - and aggravations - that real working folk encounter. One gray day in December, I happened to be in the right place at the right time to record a small slice in the life of an Amtrak conductor.

I was downtown at midday on Tuesday, Dec. 19 to photograph the arrival of Amtrak's eastbound Sunset Limited. It seemed to me the train, which was running about an hour late, powered into the station faster than usual.

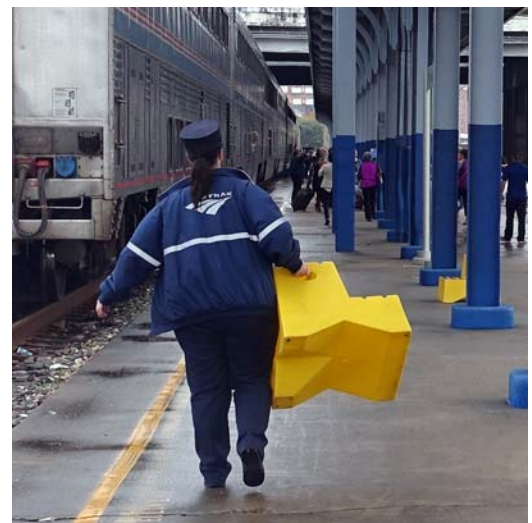
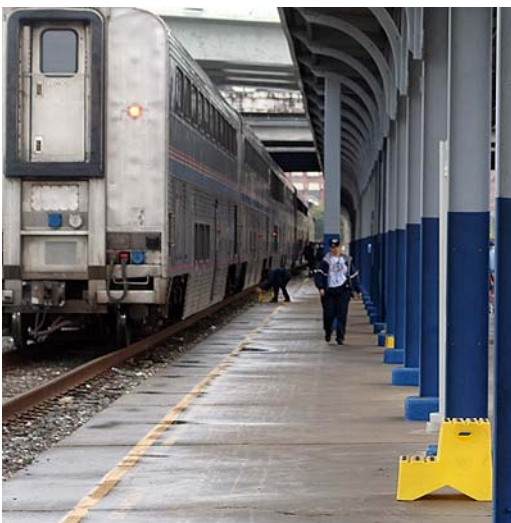
I photographed the conductor keeping an eye on things from the last car as the train rolled past me. The train stopped farther down the platform than I had expected.

The conductor hopped off the car and started moving deliberately in my direction. I was wondering what was up when she stopped and grabbed a large yellow plastic step box sitting on the platform.

I called out to her, "He made you walk a little today!" She responded, "Not even close."

She headed back to the train with the step box, stopping to pick up another that had been positioned near where the penultimate car's vestibule is usually spotted.

She seemed a little peeved.



Add color to your Amtrak consists with PVs

by Tom Marsh

N-scale modelers can dispatch accurate, modern Amtrak consists in miniature, thanks to the passenger car models produced by Kato, Con-Cor and Bachmann. However, compared to the great streamliners of yesterday, modern Amtrak trains vary little across the nation.

Double-deck Superliners glide along the high iron in the west, while in the east single-level Amfleet and Horizon cars are the most common, all decorated with variations of Amtrak's red, white and blue colors. But you can liven up your Amtrak consists with private cars.

Private cars, also known as "PVs" (short for "private varnish"), are still carried by Amtrak on many routes, and we can look close to home at Amtrak's *Sunset Limited* for our modeling inspiration. PVs came through Houston on the *Sunset* on multiple occasions in the second half of 2017.

The train's Amtrak consist is easy to model with Kato or Con-Cor Superliner cars, but we have to be a little creative with our selections for private cars, as illustrated here.



Above, American Railway Explorer's PV Kansas punctuates Amtrak's eastbound *Sunset Limited* departing Houston on Dec. 24, 2017. The car, which started life in 1950 as a Pullman Standard coach, was rebuilt into a business car for D&RGW in 1956, and the car continues to carry its later D&RGW colors. No models are available, but a Con-Cor/Rivarossi D&RGW heavyweight observation car would make a good substitute.

Right top and front cover, Patron Tequila's No. 50, a former GM&O business car, passes through Houston on the *Sunset Limited* on July 18, 2017.



We can apply modeler's license with our PVs, giving us a chance to run our favorite railroad paint schemes in a modern context. Right, PVs painted for B&O, SP and NP run through on our own Bayou City & Gulf. These are ready-to-run models; the heavyweight cars are by Micro-Trains and the dome is by Con-Cor.



Right, Micro-Trains N-TRAK special run PV on the BC&G.

Above, if you model Amtrak in the east behind Amfleet or Horizon cars, your PVs should not include domes due to restricted clearances.



Above, five private cars on a group charter head east out of Houston behind the Sunset Limited's usual Superliner consist on Aug. 15, 2017. Below, I set out to capture the consist's look and feel on the BC&G with ready-to-run cars I had on hand.



At right, top to bottom:
Lounge car Overland Trail was built in 1949 by Pullman Standard as SP No. 2981. The model is a Centralia Car Shops sleeper, the only two-tone gray SP car I have.
Dome Silver Splendor, originally named Silver Buckle, was built by Budd in 1956 for CB&Q's Denver Zephyr. The Kato model is essentially identical except for some blanked windows. My closest color match for Frisco's 1948 Pullman Cimarron River is a Con-Cor New Haven coach. A Con-Cor Texas Special car would be a better choice. Budd 10/6 sleeper Pacific Sands was built for Union Pacific in 1950. The current owner opted not to paint the entire car. The Kato model is almost an exact match, except for the name and paint.
Palm Leaf was built for Santa Fe by ACF in 1951. The Kato model is based on the same series of cars.



LCL

Less than Car Load: a few notes from your editor

Operating session date change: The next N'Crowd operating session will be hosted by Eddie Aycock on February 11.

Time to renew: The N'Crowd renewal application is included in the email delivering this issue of *The Orderboard* to current members. Renewal forms are also available in the layout room at Papa Ben's or from the N'Crowd website:
www.houstonNcrowd.org

For the consist collectors: Amtrak's Dec. 19, 2017, *Sunset Limited* (page 5) had a slightly unusual consist in that only one locomotive was assigned. The *Sunset* usually rates two locomotives east of San Antonio. The Dec. 19 train was powered by GE P42DC No. 123 and included a typical lineup of

Horizon baggage car 61040 and six Superliner cars: transition dorm-sleeper 39021, sleeper 32072, diner 38046, lounge 33009, coach/baggage 31044 and coach 34058. The train arrived in Houston at 12:12 p.m. (one hour and two minutes late) and departed at 12:42 p.m. (32 minutes late). The train was able to "make up" 30 minutes while standing still at the station because the schedule is heavily padded.

Website update: Several updates have been posted to the N'Crowd website (www.houstonNcrowd.org), including a full-year 2018 calendar of events and some new photos of old cars on the limited run cars page.

Trivia question: What do these N'Crowd members have in common: Gordon Bliss, Al Hague and Tom Marsh? See the next *Orderboard* for the answer.

HOUSTON N'CROWD 2018 TIME TABLE - SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Full year calendar is at www.houstonNcrowd.org

January 17

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

January 20-21

33rd Annual Dallas Area Train Show, Plano Centre

February 3-4

World's Greatest Hobby on Tour, NRG Arena, Houston

February 11 **NOTE DATE CHANGE!**

N'Crowd Operating Session; watch your email for additional information

February 17

Greater Houston Train Show, Stafford Centre; N'Crowd will have tables; we need volunteers!

February 17-18

The Great Texas Train Show, Premier Events Center, Lewisville

February 21

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

February 24-25

42nd Annual San Antonio Model Railroad Jamboree, Garden Ridge Community Center

March 16-18

2018 Layout Design and Operations Weekend hosted by NMRA Mid-Continent Region Indian Nations Division, Tulsa, Okla.

March 17-18

Cotton Belt Train Show, Harvey Convention Center, Tyler

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

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