



News from Houston N'Crowd

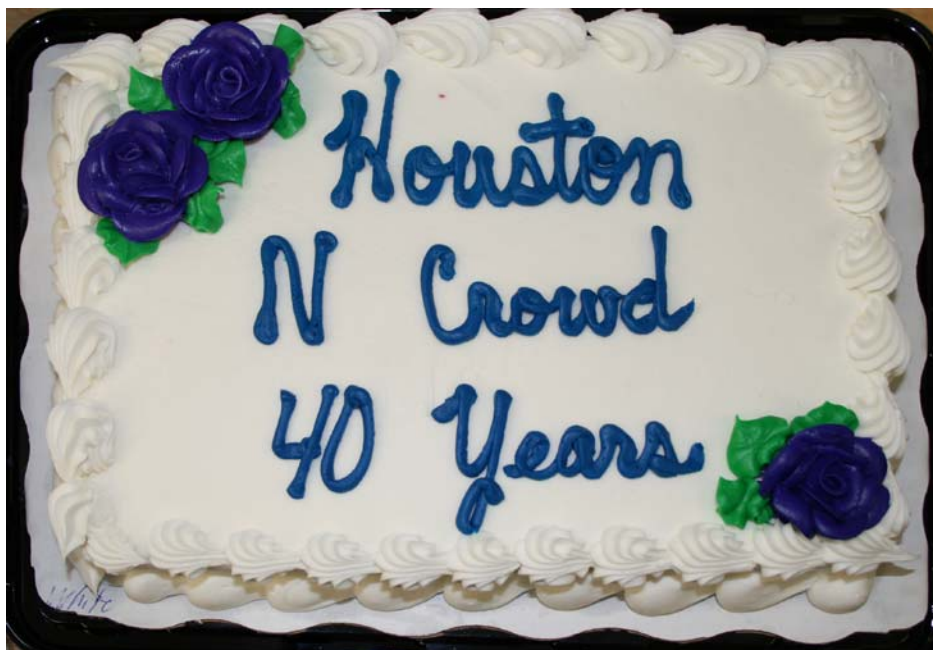


THE ORDERBOARD

March/April 2018



N'Crowd celebrates 40 years!



Photos courtesy Gordon Bliss

"GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

by Tom Marsh, President

An active year ahead

We had a good time celebrating the N'Crowd's 40th anniversary in March (see pages 4-5), and there's more to come. On the next page is the announcement for our May 26 visit to Texas State Railroad, and plans are in the works for more activities as the year progresses. We hope YOU will be able to participate as well!

Answer to last month's (incomplete) trivia question: What do these N'Crowd members have in common: Gordon Bliss, Al Hague and Tom Marsh? Along with Vincent Walker, these are the four N'Crowd members who were also members when the club formed 40 years ago.

We have a similar list of folks to recognize for longevity: Gordon, Al, Vincent, Randy Ollett and myself were also members in 1984 when the club incorporated, and Allyn Pearlman was the notary public who notarized our Articles of Incorporation for submission to the state.

The 1984 Articles of Incorporation include the names of the 26 other then-current members. Some of these friends have moved away, some have passed away, and some are still fixtures on the local model railroad scene but are no longer active in the N'Crowd. Our current roster includes 32 regular, youth and corresponding members who have paid their 2018 dues, and a dozen or so others

who have not yet paid up for the year. For those of you who need to renew, a membership renewal application is included with the email distribution of this newsletter, and the form is also available in the layout room at Papa Ben's and on our website:

www.houstonNcrowd.org

As an organization, we have been fortunate to maintain our membership at around 40 or so for years. We have been able to attract new members with a wide range of ages and backgrounds, all with a shared interest in the fun of model railroading and related railfan activities. We'll strive to maintain everyone's interest in the hobby in

the coming years, and we welcome your suggestions as to ways to do this!

Layout projects: We've slowed or stalled on several BC&G improvement projects, so at the April meeting we'll seek out some volunteers who want to get their hands dirty, so to speak.

We have some track and electrical issues to work out, along with some scenery to add, repair or improve. None of the work will be hard, so come to the meeting, join in the discussion and then join the effort.

Happy Railroading!

Tom



N'Crowd Wednesday Membership Meetings:
March 21 / April 18 / May 16 / June 20 / July 18 / August 15

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.



Join us for a Texas State Railroad adventure!

N'Crowd Vice President Richard Bartlett says it's full steam ahead for our visit to the Texas State Railroad.

Our trip will take place Saturday, May 26, and steam power is scheduled to run subject to availability. Payment can be made at the April N'Crowd meeting or by special arrangement with N'Crowd Treasurer Eddie Aycock no later than May 4 (email efaycock@aol.com).

Richard will coordinate carpooling; this will all be discussed at the April and May membership meetings. We will be boarding the train in Palestine. The plan for carpoolers is to arrive about an hour before the 10 a.m. departure to allow time to inspect T&P 2-10-4 No. 610. For those driving on their own, Houston to Palestine is just over three hours, depending on your departure point and driving style. The train will depart at 10 a.m., so allow time for highway decompression and boarding.

According to the TSRR website, no outside food or drinks can be consumed on the train. All passengers have access to the concession



TSRR No. 400 in action. Photo courtesy Texas State Railroad

car. Food is also available for purchase at both the Rusk and Palestine stations.

Fares range from \$40 to \$60 depending on the selected class of service. Young children in adult laps ride free.

- First Class is \$60 for age 13 and older, \$45 for children and you ride in air conditioned comfort with snacks and a glass of Champagne.
- Coach Class is \$45 for age 13 and older, \$30 for children and this gets you cushioned seats and opening windows.
- Open Coach Class is \$40 for age 13 and older, \$25 for children and features open window cars with wood seats.

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
 Immediate Past President Samuel Townsell II
 Layout Master Joe Kingsberry
 Editor & Webmaster Tom Marsh

40 Years of Fun!

by Gordon Bliss and Tom Marsh

Gordon writes: The Houston N'Crowd was formed in 1978 through the simple process of gathering names in a notebook at a San Jacinto Model Railroad Club Jamboree. Greg Johnson asked those interested in forming an NTRAK club to sign, and on March 15 the group gathered for the first time. Now here we are, four national conventions, many mini-cons and several layouts later, and we are still having fun!

We started out building NTRAK modules, showing them and running trains for the public at many different locations and promoting the N-scale side of the hobby. I was a young 13 years old and wanted to learn how to do all the different things in model railroading. I have had many great teachers and now try to pass on what I have learned. Along the way our club members and the club have won the prestigious Con-Cor NTRAK award four times. The conventions and layout setups were hard work, but it was well worth it.

On Saturday, March 17, 2018, we gathered for the first event in our 40th anniversary celebrations with cake and fun at Papa Ben's Train Place. Twenty-four members, including three of the four remaining charter members, were there, with the

fourth represented by his son, who is also an N'Crowd member. We held a drawing and Allan Melton won a 2003 convention car two-pack from my collection.

A group photo was taken (see cover) for an upcoming article in N Scale Railroading magazine; I am not sure that we've had 20-plus members in the club room at one time before! A lot of fun was had, and now we're looking toward the next 40 years!

We also celebrated at our March membership meeting, but I will let Tom tell that side of the story...

Tom writes: The fun continued at our March 21 membership meeting at Papa Ben's, this time with pizza and cake. After taking

care of a little club business, hot pizza arrived and the fun began. We had a number of very fine door prize items, including two "\$40 for 40" gift certificates provided by Papa Ben's owner Allyn Pearlman. The evening ended with a

spirited "off-season" Combat Gift Exchange, in which several items proved popular enough for multiple "steals".

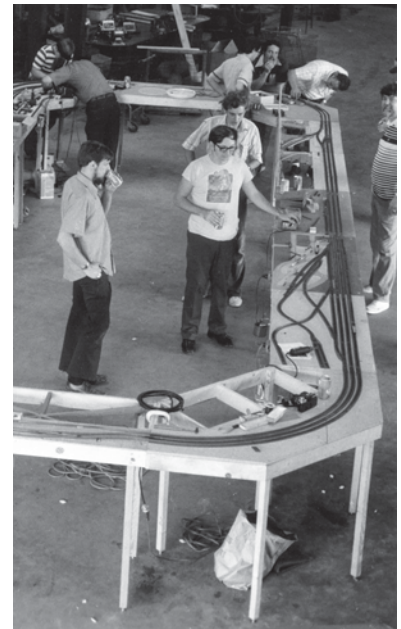
Thanks to everyone who helped organize or donated to our March anniversary celebrations!



Happy N'Crowders at the March 15 celebration. Photo by Tom Marsh



Above, we're about to have our cake and eat it too at the March membership meeting. Photo by Tom Marsh. At right, the way we were in 1978. Gordon Bliss collection
Two below, Anniversary run of Gordon's N-Crowd tank train on March 17. Top photo by Gordon Bliss; bottom photo by Tom Marsh



Operations Overload

by Gordon Bliss

In February, my wife Tina and I took a trip to Arizona so I could operate at the Union Pacific Wyoming Division. This layout, which models the Union Pacific from Cheyenne, Wyo., to Ogden, Utah, is mainly the project of one man, Veryl Fosnight, who grew up in Cheyenne. The HO scale layout is in a 50-ft by 75-ft. building in Cornville, Ariz. It has a double track mainline that is over 1,000 ft. long and requires about 50 operators.

This is a double-deck mushroom layout and running a PFE reefer train across the railroad with only one stop for engine change took just over two hours. The host has a two-day op session twice a year, as well as one-day sessions once a month.

If you are ever out that way, look them up. The Wyoming Division has an excellent website at <http://www.wyomingdivision.org/index.htm>

In March I flew to Seattle, Wash., for a three-day operations meet called Soundrails. This meet

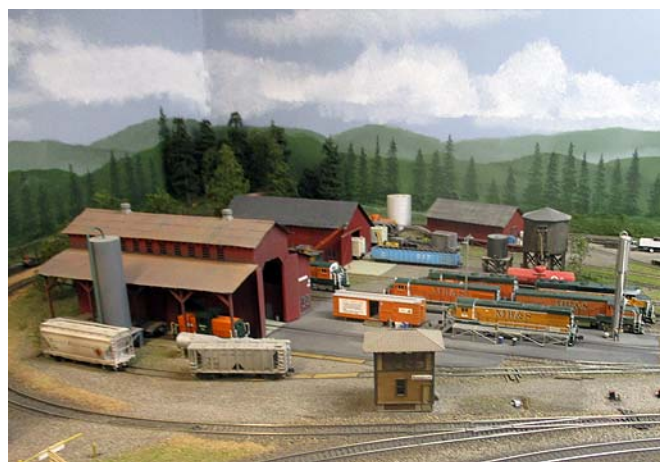
takes place every two years. I met up with several old friends, including one who is building a large Milwaukee Road N-scale layout in a 48-ft. by 96-ft. building. He just got the trains running and we helped host an open house for the first night.

Our first layout to operate was Burr Stewart's Burr-lington Northern HO railroad. This fully-sceniced layout models the upper Washington area. It looks great and operated the same.

Our second layout was Scott Buckley's Tehama Valley all-steam HO layout, which is about 50 percent done. Our final layout was the one I have wanted to operate on for years, and that was Jim Younkin's N scale Mud Bay & Southern. It is a finely-done layout with all handlaid turnouts, some code 40 track and large industry buildings. It operated flawlessly and is a true gem of a layout with all custom painted locomotives. Please "N joy" the photos!



Scenes from Gordon's recent travels. Above, UP Wyoming Division, a multi-deck "mushroom" design. Below left, the nicely-finished Burr-lington Northern. Below right, engine facility on the Mud Bay & Southern. Photos by Gordon Bliss.



Pecos River Crossing

by Hugh Boyd



Above, BNSF's new bridge across the Pecos River. This would be a relatively easy structure to model. Photo by Hugh Boyd

BNSF predecessor Santa Fe built a bridge across the Pecos River at Fort Sumner, New Mexico, around 1905 as part of the Belen Cutoff. The cutoff provided a less rugged alternative to Santa Fe's original New Mexico line across Raton and Glorieta Passes. The single-track Pecos crossing in recent years had been a significant bottleneck in BNSF's Southern Transcon operations. In 2016, a new bridge was completed, allowing for more efficient operations.

In 1935 the Sumner Dam was built on the Pecos River a few miles upstream and nowadays, what with the dam and the many irrigation canals abstracting water from the Pecos, the flow under the bridges is a mere trickle. This makes me think of a similar situation that occurred with the Aral Sea in Central Asia.



Above, the original bridge is in the foreground. Hugh notes that Photoshop provided the means to get trains on both bridges at one time. Photo by Hugh Boyd

LCL *Less than Car Load: a few notes from your editor*

40th Anniversary shirts: We'll be taking orders for another batch of N'Crowd 40th Anniversary shirts in April. Watch your email for details.

NMRA clinic series continues at Bayland Park: Be sure to check the calendar on page 8 for dates for upcoming clinics sponsored by NMRA LSR Division 8 at Bayland Park in southwest Houston. Tentatively

scheduled for May is "Basic DCC Programming", while the June presentation will cover "Smart Phone Throttles." (The May and June topics are subject to change.) July and August feature a "Make & Take" building, which will be available in multiple scales, including N. The clinics are held from 10 a.m. to noon on the second Saturday of most months. Remember, you don't have to be an NMRA member to participate!

HOUSTON N'CROWD 2018 TIME TABLE - SUBJECT TO CHANGE**March 21**

N'Crowd Membership Meeting at Papa Ben's Train Place, 7 p.m. **40th Anniversary Celebration!**

April 1

N'Crowd Operating Session

April 14

LSR NMRA Division Clinic Series, Bayland Community Center, Houston: Tuning Locomotives

April 14-15

29th Annual New Braunfels Train Show Jamboree, New Braunfels Civic Center

April 18

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

May 5-6

Austin Area Train Show, Williamson County Expo Center, Taylor

May 12

LSR NMRA Division Clinic Series, Bayland Community Center, Houston: Basic DCC Programming

May 16

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

June 3

N'Crowd Operating Session

June 9

LSR NMRA Division Clinic Series, Bayland Community Center, Houston: Smart Phone Throttles

June 13-17

NMRA Lone Star Region Convention, Round Rock

June 20

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

July 14

LSR NMRA Division Clinic Series, Bayland Community Center, Houston: Make & Take Building Session 1 (all scales)

July 18

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

August 5

N'Crowd Operating Session

August 11

LSR NMRA Division Clinic Series, Bayland Community Center, Houston: Make & Take Building Session 2 (all scales)

August 15

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

September 8

LSR NMRA Division Clinic Series, Bayland Community Center, Houston: LEDs for Model Railroaders

September 19

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

October 7

N'Crowd Operating Session

October 13

LSR NMRA Division Clinic Series, Bayland Community Center, Houston: Backdrops

Full year calendar is at www.houstonNcrowd.org

N'Crowd new member/renewal applications are available in the layout room at Papa Ben's or from the N'Crowd website: **www.houstonNcrowd.org**

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: tom@houstonNcrowd.org.

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

Visit our Web site:

www.houstonNcrowd.org

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