

News from Houston N'Crowd



THE ORDERBOARD

January/February 2020

N'Crowd T-TRAK debuts at the Greater Houston Train Show



"GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

by Tom Marsh, President

Welcome to 2020!

This issue of *The Orderboard* is a little late, but I will still wish everyone a happy new year! We've already been busy this year, as our report on the Greater Houston Train Show elsewhere in this issue shows. At our February meeting we'll be discussing more possible activities for the year.

Have a problem? If you need a little help with a troublesome locomotive or car, stop by the layout room on a Saturday where you will find no shortage of advice. That's what N'Crowd member Mauricio Varon's daughter Magnolia did recently when she was having a problem with her Kato tram, as you can see in the photo below. Fortunately, we were able to fix the problem. Magnolia's mom Melissa took the photo.

Digitrax throttles are back in service; let's keep them that way: We have three functioning DT series throttles on the BC&G, one new and two refurbished. Several of the smaller UT throttles are in operation on the layout as well. Please make note of these guidelines for their use:

First, treat them gently. Parts will break if you drop the throttles, and the buttons will stick and malfunction if they are repeatedly pressed too hard. Be sure to always release/dispatch your locomotive(s) when you stop running a train. To release a locomotive with the big DT throttles, do this:

- Push the Loco button (not hard!)
- Push the Exit button

- Push the Loco button again to set a different loco address, or unplug the throttle if you are finished running trains.

When finished with a UT throttle:

- Unplug the UT throttle
- Press and hold the Dispatch button (but not hard!)
- Plug in the UT throttle; the light that was green should now be red.
- Unplug the throttle if you have finished running trains.

Following these procedures will leave the throttles ready for the next engineer to use.

Happy railroading!

Tom



N'Crowd Wednesday **Membership Meetings:**

January 15 / February 19 / March 18 / April 15 / May 20
Meetings start at 7 p.m. at Papa Ben's Train Place, 4007-E Bellaire Blvd. and are open to all.

N'Crowd Test & Tune Sessions: First Wednesday of odd-numbered months. 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Papa Ben's.

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

We party again

And that partying had nothing to do with politics! Here are a few photos from our well-attended holiday bash and combat gift exchange at the Spaghetti Western Restaurant. We had a lively combat this year; unfortunately your editor was too involved in getting what he wanted to take any photos of the actual battle!



Houston N'Crowd 2020 Officers and Volunteers

President Tom Marsh
 Vice President John Sweigart
 Secretary Bill Busch
 Treasurer Eddie Aycock
 Board Member (2020) Samuel Townsell II

Board Member (2021) Randy Ollet
 Board Member (2022) Allan Melton
 Immediate Past President Samuel Townsell II
 Layout Master Joe Kingsberry
 Editor & Webmaster Tom Marsh

More vehicular traffic from Monaghan

N'Crowd member Andrew Monaghan has been busy producing more fine N-scale vehicle models. Here are some of his latest releases.

Most of the models are from kits by Showcase Miniatures. These include the long- and short-hood GMC/Holmes wreckers and the heavy duty Kenworth dump truck at right. The wrecker was named 2017 N Scale Vehicle Kit of the Year by the N Scale Vehicle Association.

The white wrecker in the middle photo is a kitbash of a GHQ Ford 9000 tractor with an Athearn tow truck bed.

The heavy haulers in the photos below are made up of a combination of Showcase Miniatures and GHQ models. The tractors are Showcase Miniatures Kenworth tri-axle tractor kits. The trailer with the bulldozer being hauled by the BNSF tractor is a GHQ kit. The lo-boy trailer being hauled across the BC&G mainline at Austin by the green tractor is another Showcase Miniatures kit. The rig did clear the tracks before the next BC&G fast freight blew by.



Rolling wreck



Caleb Walker kitbashed this wrecked tank car on a flat car using BLMS cars as his starting point. Photo by Vincent Walker

Long-time N'Crowd member Caleb Walker decided to model a wreck-damaged tank car being transported on a flat car for his first major N-scale modeling project. Caleb came up with the idea before Micro-Trains announced a similar model; he proceeded with

the project with his father Vincent's encouragement.

Caleb used models from BLMA (now produced by Atlas). The flat car came with positioning rigging, which Caleb used, and he added wood cribbing and tie-down chains. The wreck is ready to move!

Hone your skills with an NMRA make and take project

by Tom Marsh

If you would like some advice on many aspects of model railroading, you should attend the monthly sessions organized by the local division (LSR Division 8) of the National Model Railroad Association. In NMRA slang these are referred to as "clinics", but they are much more interesting and useful than the name sounds!

Presenters are experienced model railroaders with a variety of interests and a desire to help others learn "how-to". Recent topics have included programming DCC sound decoders, scenery techniques, tuning cars and locomotives for better performance and more.

Several N'Crowd members have taken part in the Division 8 sessions, among the most popular of which are the inexpensive "make and take" projects. The photos here show the end-results of two of the most recent make and take projects.

Most of the clinics take place on Saturdays at the Harris County Bayland Park Community Center in Southwest Houston. For more information and a schedule, go to the Division 8 website at texasgulfddivision.org.



The N-scale Ortnor hopper car kit was assembled by member Tom Wayburn. Tom experimented with the lettering on the two sides of the car. The N-scale 1920s gas station converted to a coffee shop was built by your editor. Both kits were offered in multiple scales. Photos by Tom Marsh



Walker Shops releases detailed MoPac Alcos

by Vincent Walker

N'Crowd Past President Vincent Walker reports on his latest project, a pair of Missouri Pacific Alco PA passenger units detailed and painted in the MoPac's classic Eagle paint scheme.



Variations on a theme: N'Crowd Past President Vincent Walker detailed and painted these two locomotives to represent early and late phase Alco PA2s. Photo by Vincent Walker

Just out of my MoPac paint shops are two Alco PA2 models, No. 8013, an early PA2 with the distinctive drip strip on the side over the cab, and No. 8029, a late model PA2 with Farr grills and no drip strip. These later model PA2s, which incorporated several electrical and mechanical upgrades compared to their earlier counterparts, are often mistakenly referred to as PA3s, but this is strictly a railfan designation. Most railroad historians today agree that Alco did not use the PA3 designation.

MoPac ordered three groups of PA locomotives, including eight PA1s delivered in 1949; four phase 1 PA2s delivered in 1950; six more phase 1 units delivered in 1951 and finally 18 phase 2 PA2s with Farr grills delivered in 1952.



Parts used to detail the late-phase Alco PA2 include Plano Model Products Farr grills, Precision Scale Co. brass air hoses, brass wire, styrene and other detail parts. Photo by Vincent Walker

In this article I'm showcasing the late phase PA2 No. 8029. To model this locomotive I used:

- An undecorated Kato PA shell
- Plano Model Products E8B Farr intake grills
- Precision Scale Co. brass air hose
- Gold Medal Models N-scale diesel loco detail set 160-7
- brass wire for nose grab irons
- good quality masking tape and appropriate paint

To complete the look of a late PA2, remove the drip edge behind the cab door and measure and cut the Farr grill to fit. Santa Fe fans: Santa Fe converted some PAs to Farr grills, and this can be done for a Santa Fe unit with very little touch up painting needed.

Painting the MoPac model is a four-step process:

1. Apply the base coat, in this case the blue, mask and then apply secondary colors.
2. Apply a high gloss clear coat and give it plenty of time to dry.
3. Apply lettering and striping decals. Once the decals are in place, seal them with decal setting solution. This will seal the decals to the clear coat and make it look as if the lettering is painted onto the model.
4. Finally, apply your finish coat. You have to choose if you want your model to look new or run in. You can use either a semi-gloss or dull clear spay depending on the effect you are trying to get.

I research before starting a project, using data from books I purchase from hobby shops and train shows. The research makes the models more accurate. With research, I knew I needed a late model PA for this project, but the shell would still



No. 8029 is resplendent in full MoPac Eagle colors. Photo by Vincent Walker

Missouri Pacific/IGN Alco PA Roster Summary				
Model	Original Road No.	Final Road No.	Description	Delivered
PA-1	8001-08	44-51	8 cab units	Oct 1949
PA-2	8009-10	52-53	2 cab units	April 1950
PA-2	8011-12 (IGN)	54-55	2 cab units	April 1950
PA-2	8013-18	56-61	6 cab units	May-June 1951
PA-2	8019-36	62-79	18 cab units	May-June 1952
Source: Missouri Pacific Diesel Power (Whitriver Publications) The Diesel Shop (www.thedieselshop.us/)			36 total units	All retired 1964-1966



MoPac Alco PA2 No. 71 is seen here late in life in June 1963 at Fort Worth. When delivered in 1952 the locomotive was numbered 8028; it was sold for scrap in 1965. Photo by Edward McLaughlin; Tom Marsh Collection

need modifications. For example, MoPac PAs didn't have dynamic brakes so I had to remove the dynamic brake-related items modeled on the top of the shell. I also added a "fire cracker" antenna and a prime mover intake and vent.

Don't hesitate to take on a rewarding project like this, Remember, you are the one who has to be happy and satisfied with your results. For my next project, I will be working on my Texas Chief EMD F7 which will require a little time because the four units will be re-motored, super detailed and painted. Until then, happy railroading!

N'Crowd T-TRAK Division and NWX join forces for a great Greater Houston Train Show

by Tom Marsh

With assistance from our friends in the N-scale cadre at Northwest Crossing Operating Model Railroad Club (NWX), our first T-TRAK exhibition was a success. Thanks to everyone who participated with modules or as volunteers working with the layout, and

also to those unsung heroes who manned the N'Crowd test and information tables, and ran the BC&G at Papa Ben's!

The NWX gang had a good time as well, and in fact has invited us to their monthly meetings and to work together setting up future layouts. More on that later.



As many of us are new to T-TRAK (whose idea was this, anyway?), we held several module test sessions before the show.

Thanks go to Allyn Pearlman of Papa Ben's Train Place for allowing us to set up our test rig outside of business hours.





In addition to the T-TRAK layout, we also had our usual locomotive test gear set up at our booth, along with information about the N'Crowd. We are able to test both DC and DCC locomotives, and the test tracks prove useful for many during the show.

The Greater Houston Train Show attracted an estimated 1,900 paid and unpaid admissions. Unpaid admissions included volunteers setting up and running layouts, vendors and around 150 National Model Railroad Association members who were attending the 2020 Lone Star Region NMRA convention. The NMRA event was scheduled to coincide with the train show. Seen below, NWX had their HO division's layout up and running during the show.





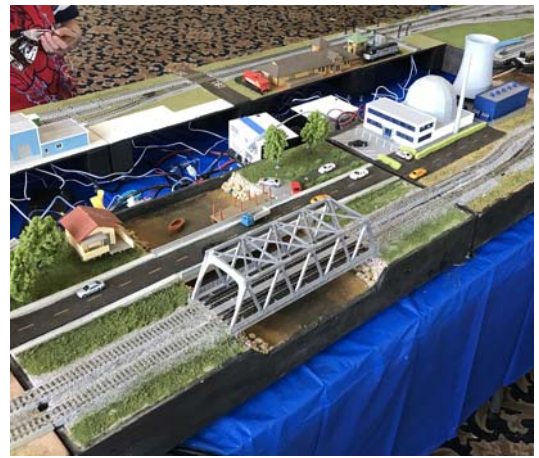
Once the layout was set up, we had a minor scare: Everything was plugged in but no power was going to the track. After jiggling a few wires things started to work, but we don't know exactly what was going on.. From that point on, the layout generally ran well, aside from the odd derailment or train decoupling. And it attracted a fair amount of attention over the course of the day.



Above, N'Crowd member Cameron Barratt's submarine pen drew many compliments. Cameron also did the scenery on two of the club's corner modules, at right.



N'Crowd members tapped into their artistic sides with their new modules. At right, Phil Poirier went rustic with his corner module. At far right, Bill Busch went nuclear and bridged troubled waters with these two modules. Below, David Crawford used two long modules to create a refinery scene.



Above, John Sweigart and Michael Angiolillo used the smallest T-TRAK template to create a greenhouse and garage scene, respectively. At left, Bob Folser went for elevation with a wooded hillside. At right, the yard built by Bill Busch and Carl White did its job well during the show.

LCL

Less than Car Load: a few notes from your editor

Chasing history in the Piney Woods: Texas State Railroad and Trains Magazine are planning a photo charter event featuring a steam-powered mixed train evoking the feel of 1920s backwoods railroading. The charter will take place May 2-3, 2020. Tickets are only \$595 each and can be ordered online at [eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com) or by phone at 800-424-2473. Tickets are not sold through Texas State Railroad. If you go, be sure to send me a few photos for publication in *The Orderboard*!

Website update: All six 2019 issues of *The Orderboard* are now available to download at

www.houstonNcrowd.org, as is the BC&G 2020 photo calendar. The events calendar has been updated as well.

Time Table question answered: Some of you may wonder why the Time Table published in each issue of *The Orderboard* includes events that have already taken place. The answer is that I consider the newsletter a “journal of record” for our club’s activities, and I want to be sure that everything is included. Who knows, someone in the future may want to know what we were up to back in “the good old days.”

HOUSTON N'CROWD 2020 TIME TABLE - SUBJECT TO CHANGE

January 2

N'Crowd Test & Tune, Papa Ben's Train Place, 6 p.m.

January 15

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

February 2

N'Crowd Operating Session

February 15

Greater Houston Train Show, Stafford Centre

February 19

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

February 22-23

44th Annual San Antonio Model Railroad Association Jamboree & Train Show, Garden Ridge Community Center

March 4

N'Crowd Test & Tune, Papa Ben's Train Place, 6 p.m.

March 18

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

March 21

NMRA LSR Div 8 Clinic, Bayland Park: Introduction to adding an Arduino based I/O system to JMRI

March 21-22

Cotton Belt Train Show, Harvey Convention Center, Tyler

March 27-29

OKC Model Railroad Expo, Oklahoma State Fairgrounds, Oklahoma City

March 28

Rosenberg Railfest, Rosenberg Railroad Museum

April 5

N'Crowd Operating Session

April 15

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

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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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