



The Beltline

On the Web at www.nattrackers.org

Official Newsletter of the National Capital Trackers

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The **Beltline** needs your articles in **MS Word format**, photos as **JPEG image files**, and links about trains and railroading, prototypical or scale, new or old. Send them to GilBaldwin3@gmail.com

NCT Club News

Next meeting is Thursday, **January 20, 2022**, 7:00PM EDT **IN PERSON** at Green Acres and via Zoom.

Membership News/Annual Dues Time!

It is now past time to send your dues for 2022 to John Masiyowski, NCT Treasurer. You may pay in person at the monthly meetings OR send a check or money order to John at the following address:

John Masiyowski, 13607 Brass Harness Ct. Oak Hill, VA 20171-3364

Dues for Passengers are \$30; dues for Partners are \$20. There are no dues for Junior members but the Junior's parent pays as a Passenger.

NCT 2021 Year in Review

The year 2021 has been a challenge is an understatement in spades. The impact of COVID-19 has stayed with us throughout the year causing show cancellations and member concerns due to safety and exposure issues. Within this framework of the many twists and turns that have presented themselves, the NCT club has made positive steps to improve the operations and the club in general.

1. Bylaw review:

The review entailed a comprehensive look at our bylaws by a select committee of partners and passengers from across our membership with invaluable input from every past president. The results were published and approved by the general membership in May.

2. Covid -19 plan:

How to cope with the pandemic was a priority. Complying with all the federal, state and local regulations was thoroughly discussed by the BOD, including legal consultation, before a workable plan was published to the membership. A real challenge for the BOD and new ground for our club.

3. Club Asset check:

Included in the COVID-19 plan was a detailed roadmap for checking our assets in both the MD and VA trailers. This included an operational check.

4. MD Power Cab upgrade:

The MD power cabinet was upgraded making it identical to the VA power cabinet. Operationally they are now the same, making it easier to maintain and upgrade. The operations of both cabinets should be transparent to our members.

5. Resume shows:

With the advent of Vaccines our show venues seemed to open up unexpectedly. Shows were scheduled in June, August, Sept, Oct, Nov, Dec.

6. Plexiglas Protective Bags:

Thanks to Bruce and Karen Kutch, plus the material from Gil Baldwin, we now have viable carrying bags and much needed protection for all the corner Plexiglas in both trailers. Long overdue.

7. Trailer loading ramps:

Another long overdue improvement for both the MD and VA trailers.

8. Zoom:

The use of Zoom to continue monthly meetings during the pandemic was successfully used. Show and tell included interesting member videos and meeting guests. The Maine 3 Railers, Richmond VA 3 Railers and a representative of the Wichita Toy Train Museum were in attendance.

9. Face-to-face meetings:

Meetings resumed at Green Acres in September including Zoom capabilities with a learning curve as far as using Zoom while conducting a F-F meeting.

10. Successful shows:

Manassas Rail-fest, Greenberg Fredericksburg, Kensington, Rockville, Quantico, College Park, Manassas Candy Factory.

11. Late cancellations:

Springfield Library, B&O Museum.

12. Elections:

Thanks to the election committee and everyone who ran for office Rick Eudy is our new VP and John Masiyowski continues as Treasurer. Two Year Terms begin with the January 20th meeting.

13. Trackmaster Training:

A Zoom Trackmaster / TM assistants review of the NCT Power Cabinets was scheduled and completed in early December. This was the initial session with future sessions being considered.

14. WIFI Helper:

A basic WIFI Helper document was put together with contributions from many members. It was distributed to the membership.

15. Beltline:

The NCT monthly newsletter contains fascinating articles about NCT History and membership along with entertaining pictures and suggestions. Our Editor, Gil Baldwin, is always appreciative of input from the Tracker membership. Consider sending him articles, pictures of your layouts or special items. How-to articles always work and just might pique the interest of our membership. Sharing our train related interests is always a good thing.

Happy New Year

Regis

National Christmas Tree Railroad (NCTRR) 1994-2020

Time moves on
All good things must end
Happiness is/was!
Why now?

The NCTRR (<https://www.facebook.com/National-Christmas-Tree-Railroad-284698638227767r>) has officially completed its mission and is shut down. Its assets are being dispersed and only the warm and proud memories last that “we done good” for hundreds of thousands of visitors to DC’s President’s Park behind the White House during the Decembers of the last 26 years. Were it that we could have done more? A few years ago a decision was made to charge the not-for-profit NCTRR for storage of the rolling stock, trackage, platforms, accessories, boxes, crates, storage shed and other paraphernalia for the 11 months between the NCT displays at the National Christmas Tree. Previously the supporting equipment was stored with the massive amount stuff in warehouses around DC under contract to support President’s Park and its activities and other programs. Additionally, the

grey hair and perms of the workers were becoming thinner and “Putting down the displays, operating, servicing them and supporting them” should be performed by members in younger folk’s clothing. Not to say or ignore the strong help Scouts groups, friends of, offspring of, associates of and, on occasion Santa himself. Santa fell victim to \$\$ shortage years earlier. Just the other day, I mentioned to several associates about the loss of the programs, they commented that they had enjoyed to activities of the NCTRR. Our leaders spent a massive amount of time and effort trying to recruit new and younger members and find more \$\$\$. They could not have tried any harder. What a great group team we assembled. We will all miss them. On the bright side, we will have such fond memories of the fellowship with the team, the President’s Park, the crowds of visitors and the tree herself. (and the squirrels and mouses!)

Do you know why the trees tended to die young? Years ago a model Train enthusiast friend of mine, who was an agronomist for the Park Service, was asked to bring a team to the tree and figure out why the tree had trouble surviving. So, I ask you: what happen in to the White House in 1812? The dastardly British burned the White House; that’s what. All the debris, ashes and trash and reconstruction trash was moved to the low land behind the White House. So, when the Agronomist team started digging around the tree base, they found charred lumber, plaster of Paris, stones and rubbish.

To old Clem personally, there are so many events, highlights, occasions in my life that “ring my bell”; “tickle my fancy”; “set me on fire”, etc., to make my chest stick out with pride... Proud I am, to have had the honor to have been invited to serve the NCTRR over more than 15 years of the program’s existence.

In my life, #1 was showing up. Next it was defeating the health problems I had as a baby, Next schooling in which I showed my towering academic skills I had: NOT. Marriage and kids are of the prime importance and accomplishment. The shivers in my spine upon every flight takeoff I made as an aviator, particularly as the dawn is breaking, the dew, snow, sun, darkness falling, gave me a jolt... I have the same number of aircraft takeoffs as landings as an aircrew member.

Somewhere high on the list is the excitement I feel surrounding me, as, successfully, I pass thru the security gates of President’s Park, leave my windows down to hear the sounds of the City and go about tending the affairs of the National Christmas Tree Railroad in the presence of the National Christmas Tree. The Tree shared her magic differently on every visit and I thank her. All types of weather, notably the morning snow swirling around the Tree, stinging our faces as we labored, showered by the sunlight filtering down thru the mini blizzard and rattling every one of the 150,000 balls and lights on the TREE. Then, there was the nut case who felt he needed to climb the tree thru the lighting-net...; always the music both live and recorded praising the LORD and the season; The Menorah standing so proudly nearby for her 8 days of celebrations, the facades of the DAR,

Red Cross, art museum, Treasury, Ag, and the little red marker light from the top of the Washington Monument winking at us. We were in the most powerful spot the world, with the back drops for the National Christmas Tree, our trains, and the world, for a month each Christmas season.

Did I mention the little school kids, each holding onto a loop in a long rope tether lead by Teach as they jostled along, tossing pennies as the passing trains and under the love of Teach? When the action stopped if/when the MAN took off in his huge Marine 1 chopper, everything was halted and we watched Marine 1 flying off on the mission at hand.

Every year we made improvements into the scene: different rail routes, more and better bridges, the operating intermodal terminal, the lit C-130 aircraft (donated by Andy Dubill of Overland- Park, Kansas, Kansas) flying high cover over the military loop, Thomas and friends in action, the fire station,

Did I mention the Christmas choir who had performed someplace in town and afterwards serenaded us all at the Tree? I cried with joy. Job? NO. Work? NO. Mega-thrill always: YES! Love was in the scene and it is the spirit of what Christmas means to me. One New Year's Eve, Sandy and I had the night duty and were asked by the Park Service to stay until midnight. At midnight, the temperature was 6 deg. F, there were six visitors, one Park Ranger and maintenance man, Security and us, and the Black Horse. When asked: our answer was "This is where we belong." I felt even more close to Sandy as I do at all times.

Did I mention how sweet Punkin pie and ice cream tastes at the METRO diner, after tucking in the trains on the tracks for the night.

Stand tall 'O National Christmas Tree, you have much more living to do, and service to the world to share.

Merry Christmas,
Sandy and Clem Clement





College Park Aviation Museum Layout, Dec. 2021, photo courtesy of Bruce Kutch.

