

Northern New Jersey Region SCCA - USMC Toys for Tots 2017 Teddy Bear Road Rally

By Peter Schneider

December 3, 2017, marked the twenty-seventh annual 'Toys for Tots' Teddy Bear Road Rally, hosted by Northern New Jersey Region of the SCCA and Motorsport Club of North Jersey. This year's sponsor and the sponsor for the past five years was Subaru 46 of Budd Lake, New Jersey.

Thirty-three teams competed in this year's event, and only one team ran the rally 'clean' and did not fall for any of the three route following traps.

The NNJR/MCNJ 'Toys for Tots" Teddy Bear Rally is the longest running charity rally associated with SCCA and the longest contiguous event hosted by Northern New Jersey Region SCCA. Since 1990 we have collected over 3,400 toys and hope to continue the event for many years to come.

This event is a very simple road rally using the back roads of Morris, Warren and Hunterdon Counties. The event started at SUBARU 46 in Budd Lake and ended about 57 miles later at the Long Valley Brew Pub in the center of Long Valley, NJ.

The rally is open to the general public and requires only a car or light truck with a working odometer and a pen/pencil to compete. The event is not a Time-Speed-Distance (TSD) rally, but a mileage-based lightly trapped "gimmick." The entry fee, per car, is a brand new Teddy Bear or new toy, worth at least \$30.00 retail which is donated to the USMC Reserve Toys for Tots Program.

Toys for Tots began in 1947, when Major Bill Hendricks, and a group of Marine Reservists in Los Angeles collected and distributed 5,000 toys to needy children. The idea came from Bill's wife, Diane. In the fall of 1947, Diane crafted a homemade doll and asked Bill to deliver the doll to an organization, which would give it to a needy child at Christmas. When Bill determined that no agency existed, Diane told Bill that he should start one. He did. The 1947 pilot project was so successful that the Marine Corps adopted Toys for Tots in 1948 and expanded it into a nationwide campaign.

The Teddy Bear Rally is a mileage-based course rally. 100 points are "awarded" for each mile variance from the official route. The contestants note their vehicle odometer readings at manned and unmanned (DIY) checkpoints as listed in the route instructions. The club, utilizing an odometer calibration leg to compute corrected leg mileages, compares them with the official leg mileages to determine the score.

Since 2016, the Region has been posting event notifications on Facebook and targeting individuals in the New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania area with low-cost ads, in addition to email blasts on Constant Contact, we have been able to maintain a steady list of entries for our events.

Since inception, the Toys for Tots rally has used 'Photo Clues' (a format borrowed from the Metro Porsche - Snowflake Rally which has been run for the past 63 years) to provide contestants a little extra challenge. These Photo Clues can be compared to 'Lettered Route Instructions' used on SCCA National Course events. The Photos of signs/scenes along the rally route at times are hard to spot (but not impossible) or are taken of easy to see common everyday signs that have slight variations due to weathering or defects. All of these features must be taken into account when correctly executing a Photo Clue instruction. In addition to the Photo Clues, the rally has also used standard route following traps based on "onto," the spelling of street signs, forced turns and reversed numbered route instructions. All route 'traps' are self-correcting, with the difference in the official on-course vs. off-course mileage helping separate the scores.

This year event had only four legs, an odometer leg and three legs that contained simple route following traps.

Photo Clue A looked like a simple crossroad sign. The crossroad sign in the photo was not the first crossroad sign you encountered; but the third, so you had to drive 2.3 miles past the first sign (you needed to be confident) to find the correct crossroad sign. In either case, the route self-corrected. The photo of the crossroad included a small section of the support post which could be clearly seen at the bottom of the picture. The first two crossroad signs you encountered had other signs directly under the crossroad sign which completely covered the support post. If you did not notice that detail — you turned at the wrong intersection and shortcutted the route by five miles, and added 500 points to your score. Fifty percent of the Expert and Intermediate teams did this trap correctly.

The next course following trick was a simple onto course following trap. Only seven of the thirty-three teams failed to stay on-course and encountered Photo Clue B and an off-course manned control. In either case, the route self-corrected, but off-course teams picked up 220 points for the mileage error and entering an off-course control.

The third trap in the event involved Photo Clue D, which was not valid because it was a picture of a house number sign **on a tree**. Per the event cover page, there were no valid route-following clues involving trees, mailboxes/mailbox supports or telephone poles. If you did not notice the sign was on a tree, you would have incorrectly executed the Special Route Instruction and driven off-course to add 130 mileage penalty points. All teams turned Left on Free Union Rd to self-correct.

The last trap in the rally caught all but three teams, **Photo Clue F** was a picture over a very large red barn, right along the side of the road and only three instructions from the end of the rally. This was the third building used as a Special Photo Clue, and the other two photos did not involve any tricks and were selected to lull the contestants into the last trap. **Photo Clue F was not valid** because it was a picture of a **Mailbox Support**. Yes, if you looked closely at the photo or the actual building as you drove past it, you would have noticed a very large mailbox sticking out of the middle of the building, **making the whole building a Mailbox Support** which per the event cover page are not a valid route-following clues for today's event. Since the Mailbox was right along the side of the building which abutted the road it was very easy to see, and the navigator could reach out and touch it if they wished, and the driver had to be careful not to clip the side door mirror since the Mailbox extended into the roadway. If you failed to notice this one little detail, you then went straight at a STOP intersection before turning Left at the next STOP intersection, per Route Instruction #28. Both on-course and off-course teams looped back to a SIG intersection and you turned toward LONG VALLEY and to the ending location at the Pub. This last trap if done incorrectly added 410 points to your score.

This event could be driven in two hours. The first car was out at 12noon and scores were announced at 3:30 PM.

The event was scored in three classes: Novice, Intermediate, and Expert, with awards for Best First Timer, Best Subaru, Best Saturn (a prior sponsor), Best Porsche, Best MG, Best Family, Best Husband & Wife and Dead Last But Finished. We keep the costs down for the awards by using simple frames to hold an individual poster type award created on a quality color printer. As the event is for a good cause, we have never had any objections from contestants on the nature of the trophies.