

WESTERN PYROTECHNIC ASSOCIATION
PRESENTS

virtual WinterBlast 2021



Newsletter Volume 32
Spring 2021

LIFTING SPIRITS WITH PYRO

WESTERNPYRO.ORG

FEBRUARY 12 - 14, 2021

Western Pyrotechnic Association

Newsletter - Spring Edition, 2021

Contents

Cover Artwork

- » Pyro Novelties

Communications from the Board

- » BoD Members

Pyro Tech Talks

- » Mike Garrett

Promotion Group

- » BoD Members

Virtual Winter Blast

- » Mike Garrett

Do It 2021

- » John Dicks

There's usually a photo here

The lack of events means a lack of photos from events.

Go to Do It, take pictures and share them with me. I'd really like to have more color in the next newsletter.

The Western Pyrotechnic Association, Inc., also known as the WPA, is a non-profit group of fireworks professionals and their apprentices. This newsletter is a vehicle for their exchange of information in this craft and the right to publish this information is guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States of America. Nonetheless, readers are urged to learn and obey all laws and regulations of all federal, state, and local jurisdictions and of their agencies and representatives. Some information herein may contain incomplete descriptions of fireworks techniques based on the experience of its author(s) in a controlled environment with circumstances, and conditions different from the reader. Readers must form their own opinion as to the application of this information. This information is considered documentary in nature and no opinion is given as to its suitability or use. No warranties are made either expressed or implied, including but not limited to warranties of the accuracy of the information herein. The WPA is not responsible for the opinions of authors or mistakes in printing. All information is intended solely for viewing by members of the Western Pyrotechnic Association, Inc. and its associates. The WPA's entire liability and anyone else's remedy shall be a refund of the subscription price. In no event shall the WPA, or its officers, or the editor, be held liable for any damages whatsoever arising out of use or inability to use the information in this publication, even if said parties have been advised of the possibility of such damages. This publication is published by and is the sole property of the copyright owner, and is not to be sold or reproduced in whole or in part without written consent of the editor and publisher. The contents of this newsletter are Copyright 2018. All Rights Reserved by the Western Pyrotechnic Association, Inc., or the author(s), if so indicated, and is re-published by permission of the copyright owner. Any previous agreement to allow any one to republish any material from the WPA, Inc. Newsletter is revoked and void as of March 1, 1995. Reproduction without permission will be deemed a purchase and implied authorization by the user to accept billing and make payment of a minimum \$50 user's fee per instance of use. Distribution is limited to paid subscribers. Submission of written material, graphics, and photographs dealing with pyrotechnics or fireworks, related technologies or activities of, and information to the benefit of the members of the WPA, Inc. are gladly solicited. All submissions become the property of the Western Pyrotechnic Association, Inc., and may be edited or rejected for any reason. No payment is made for submissions and submitted materials cannot be returned.

Communications From the Board

Well that was a strange year.

As much as we wanted to have events, there was simply no way to have large gatherings while meeting our three goals - keep our members safe, keep our host cities safe and keep our insurance policy in good standing.

With a lack of events we expected membership to drop, and it did. We lost about one third of the club members, but we hope they'll be back as soon as we have events again. For those who paid dues to help keep the club afloat, we all owe a huge thank you. The WPA is our outlet to safe, legal hobbyist pyro, and the folks who helped keep the lights on did us all a big favor.

Financial update

For the past 3+ years, the Board has had a set of three long term goals that are reviewed regularly, and reevaluated annually. When Covid hit, we decided to focus on the survival of the club - we knew that revenue would drop by a huge percentage but the expenses wouldn't change much. We also decided to continue to focus on the financial issues. We got more of the finances dealt with, and will now have Profit and Loss statements for the club and for events in the Members section of the website.

Notes from the Secretary

I hope everyone is well, and you are on your way to being fully vaccinated. Wow - what a VWB we had huh? It's amazing what Mike Garrett, Dave X and their team was able to pull off - it JUST 11 weeks! I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did. You know, this was the first WinterBlast ever that I was able to attend seminars. Hopefully it won't be the last time I attend a seminar. It was great seeing everyone during the virtual AfterGlow - imagine how far technology has come that it allowed 300 people to meet almost like we do at the host hotel. Definitely looking forward to the next in-person WWB.

Here's an update on membership - through the end of May 2021, the Club has 403 active members. We currently have 6 international members: 3 from Canada, 1 from Austria, and 2 from Germany.

The Promotions Committee has been busy at work finding new outlets for raising funds, and providing WPA-branded (and non-WPA) merchandise. I know I will be making a purchase or two and I hope you do as well. So making the Promotions Committee a permanent committee is something the Board authorized during the March meeting. We've also been busy with our Strategic Planning and transitioning the Treasurer Duties to Craig Cutright - welcome aboard Craig!

It looks like the 4th of July fireworks season is well underway. I just attended the Pyro Spectaculars virtual Operator Seminar and things are looking good! While I don't have a show just yet, I do expect to land one. With the 4th falling on a Sunday, there will be shows all weekend long.

And finally, I am holding out hope that Do-It 2021 will go on as planned. We've got the dates, hotel rates and the folks in Hawthorne have been notified of our intent. Being this first larger-scale in person event, this may be one of the largest Do-It events in the Club history - so start making your plans! I don't think I will be able to make it (not enough vacation time!!), so I am looking forward to seeing you all at the next WWB. That's it for now....

Pyro Shack(tm)

Buy stuff for yourself and contribute to the WPA

Next Winter Blast, make sure to stop into the vendor tent and buy some WPA branded merchandise. All sales are handled by Pyro Shack(tm). The Pyro Shack(tm) is an arm of the WPA that performs charitable fundraising services by means of selling t-shirts, hooded sweatshirts, and hats to raise funds for pyrotechnics education. The pyrotechnics education happens through the seminars, demonstrations, manufacturing, and public displays at Western Winter Blast.

Officers and Elections

Aubrie Ross was appointed Treasurer in June '20, and was able to serve the club until the February '21 election. Craig Cutright ran unopposed for Treasurer. Craig comes from a pyro and accounting background, and we feel we're in very competent hands. Thank you Aubrie and Craig.

The positions of VP and Secretary were also open. Lonny and Dennis ran unopposed and are back for two more years. Thank you gentlemen.

WWB '22 will see elections for the President and VP of Communications.

Cleanup policy at events

The WPA events are run by volunteers, and that includes you. Cleanup isn't glamorous, and we all want to get on road to be back home again ASAP. However, the event site needs to be clean before we leave.

We have three choices - clean it ourselves, raise event fees and hire it out, or hire out the heaviest work and do the rest ourselves. We chose the last option.

We have a system that we think is fair.

How it works

- Everybody except minors pays a clean up deposit (it's usually about \$20) when you register
- When you help clean up, sign in and out at the registration booth
- All the clean up deposits go into a pot that related fees (dumpster, labor, etc) are paid from
- The remaining money is split among folks who helped clean up, based on hours worked
- People who don't help don't get any of their deposit back
- People who stay for all of the cleanup usually get a lot more back than what they paid in
- Lunch served at the end of cleaning

You have the option of donating your cleanup funds to the club. If you clean up and don't sign in, your deposit is split among the other workers. If you sign in and check the "donate to the club" box, your share will go back to the club.

Pyro Tech Talks

Mike Garrett

It has been a strange year with the Covid virus keeping us all hunkered down and well away from what we all love – fireworks. About a year ago several WPA members were lamenting about how all this was messing up our lives and how we wanted some form of pyro expression as a diversion. That conversation led to the concept of on-line educational seminars about fireworks and how there really was nothing like that out there for the pyro consumer. So we developed the idea of Pyro Tech Talks and made a proposal to the Boards of both the WPA and PGI. They agreed with our proposed plan, and here we are today with more than 30 presentations done and recorded. There were significant bumps along the development path, but difficulties should be expected when pioneering something, right?

Exactly what is Pyro Tech Talks (PTT), you ask? PTT is an online seminar series of pyro related subjects sponsored by the WPA and PGI. Presentations are given on a semi-regular basis (one about every 4 weeks) on Saturday mornings. They cover a wide variety of interests from show choreography to fireworks history to 'how to' episodes and more. Many noteworthy presenters have graced our series including Bob Winokur, Kurt Medlin, Barry Sturman and Mitch Piatt to name but a few. There is often a panel of experts available during the presentation and the audience is encouraged to submit questions to be addressed real time during the recording.

Check out the upcoming schedule here - <https://www.westernpyro.org/seminars>
The recorded sessions are available to WPA members in good standing here - <https://www.westernpyro.org/recordings>.

The PGI website is being overhauled and should have these PTT sessions available to their members shortly as well.

The PTT seminars are for you, so please check them out. We think you will find something interesting to scratch your pyro itch. We are constantly searching for new and interesting topics and presenters. Therefore, if there is a subject that interests you then please feel free to suggest them or better yet, offer to make a presentation. Send your ideas and comments to seminars@westernpyro.org.



Promotions Group

After the success of VWB, we were approached by part of the group that was helping promote Pyro Tech Talks and VWB. They proposed that the Board approve a permanent group to promote the club and club events.

Based on their performance for VWB and Pyro Tech Talks, a well organized presentation and very modest budget request, the Board approved their proposal. They did a fantastic job of promoting VWB and helped make it a very profitable event, while exposing the WPA to new potential members.

Amanda Nixon, Jackie Whedbee, Lonny Ross and Richard Hasse have been in the club for quite a while, and you probably know them already. Our newcomer is Sam Christensen. Sam's been working with Pyro Tech Talks and VWB, in addition to working in the pyro industry.

We'll continue to use the WPA mailing list "the digest" to communicate with members, and it will stay members only. The promotions group will also use other communications like Facebook and a mailing list that includes non-members. You can contact them at promo@westernpyro.org if you have questions.

The Board welcomes and thanks Amanda, Richard, Sam, Jackie and Lonny.

One of the first things they did was create WPA themed merchandise and offer it for sale at Redbubble. <https://www.redbubble.com/people/WPA-PyroShack>

If you aren't familiar with Redbubble and other "print on demand" stores, let me explain. These online stores allow you to upload an image and have it printed on coffee cups, can coolers, t-shirts and many other items. However, the items aren't printed until somebody orders something. The store takes care of the website, sales, credit card handling, shipping - everything but the original image and choosing which items to sell. The WPA never touches the merchandise.

The positive parts of this model is that the WPA doesn't have to spend any money, store any shirts, process credit cards or ship orders. The downside is that the prices are higher than mass produced shirts. Each item will sell for a small (\$2-\$3) profit, and the company will send us money quarterly. The artist will receive a share of the profit, and the promo team will be looking for new designs on occasion. The sales of merchandise aren't intended to bring a ton of money to the WPA, but it will allow our members to get exactly what they want, with new designs being available from time to time. It will also allow non-members to buy items, and help promote the club

The use of Redbubble won't impact the t-shirts and other merchandise sold at events. Ryan will be making shirts for Do It, and Ann will be working with Pyro Novelties to all our goodies at WWB.

Virtual Winter Blast 2021

Mike Garrett

Late November 2020 – “Dang! WWB2021 has just been canceled as an in-person event. Now what? What could we do instead?” “Hey, what about that Pyro Tech Talks thing? Can it be adapted to work as some sort of virtual convention?” “Uh, yes but we’ve never done anything like that before ... but what could possibly go wrong?”

With only 10 weeks to re-imagine WWB2021, a small group of dedicated pyros took the challenge of producing a virtual convention and came up with VWB2021 – Lifting Spirits with Pyro. (Thanks to Marty Walker for the event name!) With almost no time to react, we pivoted to this new concept and started recruiting volunteers. In the end we found more than 30 staff volunteers to make it all happen, and each of them did incredible things under difficult circumstances.

In addition to the staff, we also found about 15 excellent seminars with outstanding presenters, display programs for two nights, daily news spots, many sponsors, a Builders Showcase and maybe most importantly, nearly 400 attendees.

To make it all work we needed several new approaches. Pyro Tech Talks (PTT) already used Zoom for webinar presentations, so we leveraged that knowledge. But we also needed live streaming tech for the evening displays. Speaking of displays, how are we going to do that? What about sponsors and vendors? That needs a new approach, too. Since this whole thing is virtual, how do we manage on-line registration and merchandise sales? How do we get the word out? What about After Glows? Our conventions are social events after all. As you can see, we had a lot of uncharted ground to cover. But cover it we did. In fact, we did a spectacular job in all areas with only a few hiccups. While most (all?) of us on the VWB2021 staff hope we never have to do a virtual convention again, we all know that we put together a great event under difficult circumstances. I want to thank all the volunteers, presenters, sponsors and attendees for making VWB2021 a success.

The Board would like to thank Mike and the entire crew of volunteers, presenters and sponsors who made this event possible. It came to life in a very short time, turned a profit and was a ton of fun. Thanks to all the members and non-members who participated and made it worth their time.

We feel that VWB had two additional benefits to the club. VWB gave our members a reason to continue to be members, and to pay dues. VWB also helped spread the word about the WPA to pyros in other clubs. VWB was a great marketing tool, and may help us regain the membership numbers we need.

Do It 2021

The Board is feeling optimistic that we'll be able to put on Do It this fall - our first in-person event since WWB 2019. John Dicks has been chosen as Event Chair again. Let's hear the details straight from John.

Early planning is underway for Do-It 2021. I have sent the letter to the Hawthorne Airport Board (managing body for the racetrack) that the WPA wants to secure the dates of Tuesday, September 22 through Sunday, September 26 for our event. Setup will be Tuesday and Cleanup will be Sunday.

Do-It is held in the small community of Hawthorne, Nevada located about 120 miles south and east of Reno. It is the largest military ammunition depot in the free world; hence its acceptance of US Stinkbugs. It is a small community and very patriotic with several unique attractions: a military ordnance museum to behold, a mining museum, Walker Lake, Mt. Grant with a huge desert bighorn sheep population, Lucky Boy Pass, the most ammunition storage bunkers you will ever see in your life and a bunch of friendly people. We actually have a few members that are resident citizens of Hawthorne.

Next we will designate the staff and work on a budget. The Board is determined to make Do-It at least a break even event. We will need to trim some costs and perhaps raise the fee slightly. Our Treasurer, VP of Communications, and Richard Haase are working with me on it. We will work it out and let everyone know well ahead of time.

Do-It's focus is manufacturing. But, of course, there is plenty of opportunity to shoot and we do have Class "C" vending. For those of you with an itch to manufacture, but are somewhat shy about it, our Manufacturing Chair, Dr. William Ryan, has volunteered to conduct a seminar for beginners. I have had initial discussions with Bill and he is recruiting help from other experienced manufacturers. He expects to hold the instruction daily so you will be able to attend even if you arrive other than the first day.

Due to our inability to hold Do-It last year and Winter Blast being virtual rather than actual, I am thinking some members are really needing to "smell the smoke". Therefore, we should have more sign-ups for the event. Usually, we have somewhere around 100 attendees. Perhaps this year we will top out upwards of 150-175. That would be just peachy!

Accommodations and restaurants are modest in Hawthorne. Which is good from an economic standpoint. We do plan on having on site RV camping without charge. It will be boon-docking without water, electric, or sewer, but you will be able to hitch up and get those services in town. There is also a full service RV park within a short distance.

Covid-19 may still be of concern. I have assured the Airport Board we will be sensitive to the fact that we will be bringing significant numbers of attendees from distant locations. Depending upon circumstances at the time, rules will have to be set and adhered to.

Stay tuned! We will keep you informed as details develop, but mark your calendars with the dates now and set aside some fun money.

The Bug

Do It Details

Event: Wednesday to Saturday, September 22 - 25

Setup: Tuesday, September 21

» Assisting in setup may allow you to start manufacturing on Tuesday. Stay tuned.

Cleanup: Sunday, September 26

Food: There may be an option to eat dinner on site. Details are being worked out.

Host hotel: Travelodge

The host hotel for Do-It is the Travelodge. It is associated with the El Capitan Casino, in Hawthorne, NV.

www.elcapcasino.com/accommodations/

Rob was appointed "Hotel Discount Rate Chair" and got us a great deal again.

The discount rate we will receive is \$50/night + tax (approximately \$56 total). That is a \$30/night discount, vs. the posted rate.

Tell the reservation person that you are with the WPA, to receive the discount.

At this point, we have 80 rooms set aside for our group. If reservations are not being made in a timely manner, that number will be reduced. In the past, the host hotel has been completely sold out, on the weekend we are there. So, make your reservations early.

Travelodge Reservations: 775-945-3321 or 800-922-2311

See you there!