

# The Gas Line

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## Board of Directors

Bill Beery

Paul Engberson

Lewis Rounds

Doug Schwarzenberger

Bob Thompson

Yale Harker



Christmas Party 2021 – Happy New Year!

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## President's Corner

I want to wish everyone a happy new year. Thanks to Doug Schwarzenberger and Bob Thompson for their excellent leadership. I'm pleased that Bob will remain on as Vice President and Joy Eagle will continue as secretary/treasurer.

I was hoping that COVID would be in the rear-view mirror by this time, but that seems to be not the case. Nevertheless, we are planning to have tours and activities as close to pre-COVID as possible. It is my goal to have a business meeting and at least one activity every month.

In January we will be meeting on January 6<sup>th</sup> for a business meeting at the Idaho Falls Activity Center at 7 p.m. and on January 8<sup>th</sup> we'll have a Brrrr Lunch at Cedric's on Broadway at 2 p.m. Please note that it is not a breakfast, but you can order breakfast if you want. If you feel that you cannot attend because of safety reasons, I understand but be assured we'll take every precaution to keep us safe.

I want to wish Rich Eagle a speedy recovery from heart surgery and look forward to seeing him and his Model Ts at our activities soon.

Yale



**CHAPTER EVENTS**

**Jan 6** – Chapter Meeting, Idaho Falls Activity Center, 1575 N. Skyline Dr., South Meeting Room, 7 p.m.

**Jan 8** – Brrr Lunch at Cedric's, 1260 W. Broadway, Idaho Falls at 2 p.m.

**MEETING TREATS**

Coming Soon!

**NATIONAL EVENTS**

**Jan 13 – 16:** 83rd Annual Meeting and Award Banquet, Tempe, AZ. Steve Partman, (630) 470-3749 or [smpartman@outlook.com](mailto:smpartman@outlook.com)

**Apr 3 – 9:** 2022 Western National Tour, St. George, UT. Steve Fitzgerald, (970) 209 7814 or [studebakersteve@bresnan.net](mailto:studebakersteve@bresnan.net)

**May 1 - 6:** 40<sup>th</sup> Chrome Glidden Tour, Grand Island, NE. John Nikodym, (402) 746-3825, [jjnikodym@gmail.com](mailto:jjnikodym@gmail.com)

**Christmas Party Photos**





## Yes, Virginia, Santa Did Arrive via Rocket Ship. And a Rocket Sleigh.

### And a Super Rocket...By Daniel Strohl of Hemming's Motor News, December 2021

Traditional Christmas tales have Santa piloting a magical flying sleigh. The Beach Boys envisioned him in a souped-up candy apple red hot rod. Chuck Berry thought Santa could get around by taking the freeway down. But Lloyd Laster of Tyler, Texas, had an altogether different idea of how Santa Claus got around: rockets.



Can't blame him, really. In the Fifties, rockets and jets captured everybody's fascination, so Laster capitalized on the trend with the first Santa's Rocket Ship, a commercial bus of unknown origin rebodied in aluminum with rows of portholes, a pair of warp nacelles up top, a set of token skis at each skirted wheel, and rows of North Pole portholes for windows. His scheme called for hiring a guy in a Santa suit, a couple of leggy elves, and a driver, then charging malls around the South and Southwest to show up and give kids the chance to take a ride with the jolly old elf.

This was apparently an established business practice, something like the currently popular Polar Express train rides, as we see from this archive photo we dug up a couple years back showing a decorated city bus operating as the Santa Special.

Except Laster really committed to it and found that it paid off, up to \$2,000 per day, according to Beth Jacobs of Mukluk Land in Tok, Alaska, where a restored Santa's Rocket Ship now resides. Laster decided one just wasn't enough - likely due to the limited window in which he could operate the custom vehicle (though we can imagine he took off the skis and changed the lettering to find non-seasonal uses for his investment) - so he built three more Santa's Rocket Ships as well as Santa's Rocket Sleigh, Santa's Space Sleigh, and Santa's Super Rocket. The various rides incorporated plexiglas roof inserts (making them look something like the Citroen U55 Cityrama sightseeing buses in Paris) and a special intercom system that would allow Santa to phone the kids' Christmas gift requests straight to the North Pole. As many as 100 to 120 kids could fit in the vehicles at any one time.



Laster continued to operate the fleet for a couple of decades, as we can see from the November 1967 photo at the Sears in Shreveport, Louisiana. Various sources on the Internet have him selling off the five vehicles on his retirement in 1974, with all five going to Wisconsin for a few more years on the road under the aegis of the Santa Claus Rocket Corporation, which added a drivable capsule-like Santa's Moon Rocket to the available attractions.

Rising costs have been quoted as the reason the Santa Claus Rocket Corporation called it quits sometime in the mid- to late Seventies and consigned the vehicles to the junkyard. There they remained for a good 30 years until George and Beth Jacobs spotted one while visiting family in Wisconsin.

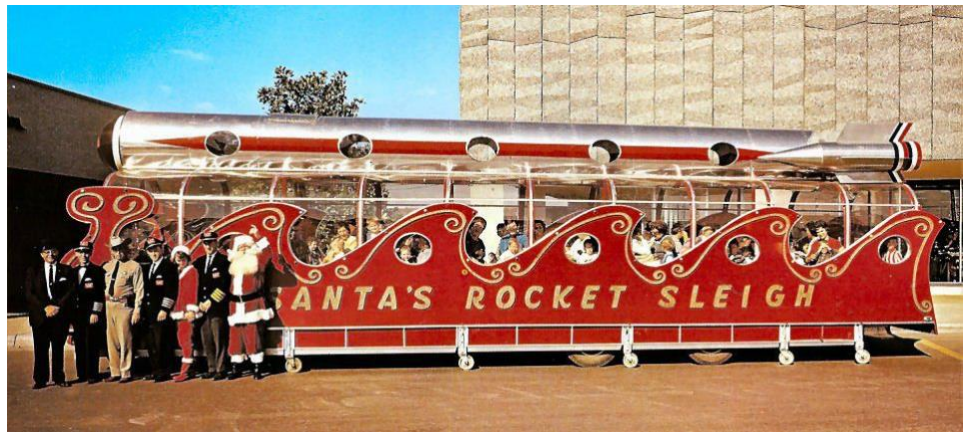
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## Rockets (continued)

The Jacobs had already established Mukluk Land along the Alaska Highway as a roadside attraction, populated with all sorts of ephemera, including old mining equipment and a Studebaker M29 Weasel, so they made an impulse purchase and bought one of the Santa's Rocket Ships. It sat at Mukluk Land unused until about four years ago when the couple re-painted it, re-leathered it, and started putting it in Tok's annual Fourth of July parade.



The Santa's Super Rocket bus apparently still exists as well, though the rest of the Laster-built Santa vehicles remain unaccounted for.

## Pumpkin Daze Photos

