

Marine Corps National Museum Show

February 6-7, 2009

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President, TCA and
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Golly, my proud meter is pegged way over the top. Last weekend the National Capital Trackers were invited back to the USMC Museum at Quantico, VA to set up and operate our modular train layout. For many of us, we were still tingling from our first mission there 18 months ago. And to think I got to participate in making 1600+ museum visitors a little happier on a winter Virginia weekend. A fine time for all involved, that is for sure.

We set up on the main floor right in view of the front entrance. We could hear the squeals of the kids coming on the door "LOOK TRAINS!!" followed by the scampering sound of happy feet on the hallowed polished floor where many Marines have tread and they entered this precious museum to honor our fine Marine traditions. (I need a better word here than I possess)... sadly or proudly or especially or lovingly seem not to be the word to describe what I wish to express... but help me get through to you the important message that many of the kids had only one parent, a neighbor, a friend, or several buds with them because the other parent/guardian was in harms way. It takes a village to raise our families and the tightly knit Marine family was out in force playing trains.

Did I mention that there was a volunteer group of ladies there as well knitting face warmers for their Marines. I overheard a mother telling her gaggle of kids where she had been stationed and her war time actions. Them kids were in awe of "Mommy, the warrior" (Sumthin got in my eye and I bumped into a wall).

I must mention that I so enjoy this mission that I'm psychosquished after a weekend with these heroes all. The Marine sayings on the rounded walls, the aircraft hanging over head, the photos of battles fought and won for America, the names of the heroes, and the Presence of Marine Pride overwhelms me.

For this mission we got to set up Saturday morning. I arrived later in the morning, so I did not experience to fun of finding and assembling the right pieces and wires. I did get there in time for donuts and coffee. We were up and running when the Museum opened at 10 am and kept trains in motion until 5 pm both Saturday and Sunday. If I count correctly, we had 37 modules in a modified figure eight, which makes for plenty of motion and action. We ran trains from Tony Duncanson's brand new French style steamer by MTH to Lionel and Marklin of the early thirties. Oh, and the IVES white owl set of the 20's. Glenn Mackinnon had his Lionel rocket engine which fires white rockets and shot down all the Commie finko Migs to the glee of many a kid. Both freight and passenger consists plied the busy rails, usually with more than one train on the same track. I think the retired Marine Corps fighter aircraft "flying" overhead felt warmed by the sounds and smells from the trains being played with in the American freedom they flew to protect. We all talked throughout the day with the visitors and listened to their stories as well. Seems with trains about, conversation flows easily.

We were able to grab a bit of sustenance in Tun Tavern, a replica of the place in Phila where the Marines were formed. Please see <http://www.usmcpres.com/index.htm> for the story of Tun Tavern and other interesting facts and traditions of the USMC. The large painting on one wall depicts faces of many famous Marines dressed in bib, tucker and tails sippin a pewter cup of refreshment. Neato, but I wish I had asked where George was in the painting. I'm most respectful of our Marine heroes, but I can't imagine those fighters all in the same room, dressed to the nines, chatting quietly for more than 0.0000056 seconds(:>).

We all enjoyed chatting with the duty Marines at the entrance counter. They are on a one or 2 year volunteer assignment with the Museum. One had two tours in Afghanistan and another had a tour in Afghanistan and one in Iraq. Most were from the same unit and had fought together in house-to-house warfare and were in "spit and polish" helping others enjoy the museum. The Marines with whom I spoke emphatically stated that they would rather be back in the fray. Where do we grow such fine men and women?!?

Sunday evening we packed up as a team effort and celebrated the event with some fine chow at Dixie Bones in Occoquan (Don't tell nobody about them hot apple turnovers.)

Photos will be on the NCT web site.

<http://www.trainweb.org/NationalCapitalTrackers/NCTHome.html>

We all thank the Marines for inviting us to play trains with them and hope to return soon to the wonderful USMC Museum. Why not join us on our next mission.