

## CHRISTMAS LIGHT TOUR OF HOUSTON

Thursday, December 16, 2010

On all of our tours we have cancellations. It's just part of dealing with people our age. For this trip we had a bus load sign up and had a Wait List of ten people. It is a good feeling when everyone that can go and wants to go gets to go. We were down to the last day with one vacant seat and one couple still on the Wait List. I received a call from LaZelle Bradley and she said the day of the tour was her actual birth day and she had just learned that a friend was giving her a "surprise" birthday party the evening of our trip. She said to keep her friend from being "surprised" she would cancel their two seats and be ready to go to the party. That allowed me to take care of the last couple on the Wait List. That, of course, still left one vacant seat. Later that night I received a call from Lee Roy Cates and he had a friend he would like to bring as a guest. I said "Great". That gave us a completely full bus and no one would be left behind. At last, a perfect situation, and that is the way it was except one couple did not show up before the bus had to leave.

We planned for an early evening meal so we would be ready to view lights as soon as it was dark enough. We selected Clay's Restaurant that is located on Clay Road west of Hwy. 6. It is a large, rustic designed building that caters to serving families. They have a log cabin behind the main building that was just large enough to seat our crowd of thirty eight. The food servings were more than ample and tasted very good. I noticed that a good number of the Explorers left with boxes in their hands.

Our tour of Christmas lights generally followed the same path as last year's very successful outing. We had the same driver, Larry Gurka, who also served as the tour guide. He is very knowledgeable about the history of the areas we toured. The traffic was still very heavy as we started our tour but we made better time as the evening progressed.

Our first viewing was in the Spring Shadows subdivision located in the area of Gessner and Kempwood. The highlight was the home of Ray Johnson, son of the developer of Spring Shadows and Memorial City Mall. His large home is located in a cul-de-sac that is vacant except for his home. The vacant land is planted in live Christmas trees that are all decorated. Besides the house there are all kinds of other decorations such as lollipops, cookies, ice cream cones and a gingerbread house. We were told that some of the decorations used in the Mall turn up the next year in his yard.



Gingerbread House in the Roy Johnson Yard - 12/16/10

Our next area to tour was Tanglewood. This subdivision had lights everywhere - on the houses, trees and shrubs. What is so beautiful are lights in mass and the greatest percentage of homes lit was definitely in this area. Most of the lights were clear and more and more homes are using the L.E.D. lights that are much brighter. It is so easy to tell the difference when they are side by side with the regular lights.

We moved on to the Post Oak and Galleria area. There we saw all the trees and lights that are officially lit the day after Thanksgiving to supposedly start the Christmas Season. It was only a short distance from there to Highland Village where all of the buildings and stores had the same lighting design. There were huge red bows on the top of each building.

Our next destination was River Oaks where we were not disappointed with their decorations. Not every house was decorated but there were many with beautiful lights. We were surprised how many parties were going on - many more than the day we selected last year. Most of the streets are fairly narrow in River Oaks and with lines of cars parked on both sides of the street it was not easy for the large bus to maneuver. At one home Santa Claus was in the front yard. We stopped and he boarded the bus and greeted us. Along with a lot of Ho, Ho, Ho's he wished us all a very Merry Christmas. Part of the decorations on one home was a large Angel, nearly as tall as the house. We drove by Tilman Fertitta's home and, once again, he had a digital clock that showed the days, hours and minutes until Christmas Day.



Santa, on the bus, greeting  
the Explorers - 12/16/10



Angel in a River Oaks front yard -  
12/16/10

It was only a short distance to Downtown where we observed both the street and store decorations. We drove around Discovery Green Park and there were lots of people taking in the various attractions. The largest crowd was at the outdoor skating rink. Just south of town we toured the Scott Terrace subdivision. A couple of the streets had lighted arches across the street and every home had some decoration. We stopped at the home of Gladys Jones and she boarded the bus to welcome us. Every inch of her yard is covered with various lighted decorations.

The home that should win the Grand Prize for Houston lighting decorations was our last stop of the evening. We saw it last year and, if possible, there seemed to be more lights added. The home is located near the intersection of Briar Forest and Seagler in the Briargrove Park subdivision. There are solid L.E.D. lights of different colors on each outside wall and the roof. The sidewalk and trees are lined with lights. Above the home, not attached to the roof, is Santa with his sleigh full of toys, led by Rudolph and the other reindeers, flying over. It was quite a finish to a very enjoyable evening.



Grand Prize House in Briargrove Park subdivision - 12/16/10