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One Billionaire's Home, Countless Stares



Janet Durrans for The New York Times

Paul Tudor Jones II, the hedge-fund billionaire, presents a holiday light show in his front yard in Belle Haven.

By KRISTIN HUSSEY Published: December 16, 2007

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SCORES of cars from all over Fairfield and Westchester Counties, and some from as far away as New Jersey, drive past the guard house at the entrance to Belle Haven, the exclusive neighborhood on Long Island Sound.

From there, off-duty police officers direct drivers to the waterfront home of Paul Tudor Jones II, the hedge-fund billionaire who, from Dec. 7 to Dec. 20, turns his front yard on Harbor Drive into a stage for an elaborately choreographed holiday light show.

Towers of flashing lights are coordinated to holiday music booming from speakers and on

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90.5 FM. At key parts of the three-minute extravaganza, tufts of snow shoot from machines into the air.

“I love it,” said Eleni Minos of Queens, who works at an estate down the street. “I bring my grandkids to see it.”

Mr. Jones, 53, has mounted the Christmas spectacles for years, and word of mouth spreads quickly. A professional lighting-design team comes up with a theme each year, then brings it to life. This year’s theme is “dreaming of Christmas,” with brightly colored images of toys, candy and snow culminating in the final message: Joy to the world.

“It’s kind of a known thing,” said Kate Balanoff, of Darien, who drove the 10 miles with a friend and three of their children to see the lights last week.

Because of the location of Mr. Jones’s house and the narrowness of the streets, only six to eight cars can see the full show at a time. Mr. Jones pays the off-duty officers to wave drivers into position, and on a busy night, 200 cars may parade past, the police said.

Running a popular Christmas attraction like this requires a delicate balance. The show is clearly designed to attract spectators, but too much attention can irritate the neighbors. Occasionally, so many cars jam the streets that the police shut the show down.

Why does Mr. Jones, who ranks 105 on Forbes list of the 400 richest Americans, with a net worth estimated at \$3.3 billion, put such show on for strangers?

A spokesman for Mr. Jones said he was traveling last week and unavailable to comment. But a man pulling out of the driveway one night last week, who identified himself as Patrick and who said he works for the Jones family, said Mr. Jones just loves Christmas and wanted to share that love with the community.

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