

## Spring Thing 2023 By Lee Fowler

### Prelude

Well once again I'd decided not to write a trip report for Spring Thing. I know, I know! I say that at the beginning of every trip report. But I'm serious this time. Why? Because I got an email from Dave Schroetter stating "I think you will be challenged having a trip report ready for the April Newsletter! Probably can't be done in that short period of time." Now it was blatantly obvious that Dave threw down the gauntlet. Deliberately challenging me! Implying that I couldn't possibly write a trip report that quickly. Baloney! I can write that kind of BS real fast. No way can he goad me into writing one. Why? Because our Heart O' Dixie newsletter editor Scott Witt made a change to my last trip report, so I vowed to never write another one. "Editor's privilege!" said Scott. "Writer's privilege!" says I. I'm as stubborn as a barn full of mules. He can't edit what I don't write. (Ed. note: The editor's privilege is, in fact, pre-eminent; just ask any editor. To Lee's credit, however, I was wrong on my edit, as he graciously pointed out. Just because my editing is pre-eminent, doesn't mean it can't be wrong. But it's still pre-eminent!)

Besides, I've written so many of these trip reports that they have all started sounding alike. I could probably just pull up the Spring Thing trip report from 2008 and do some minor edits. Then I thought, it's the middle of February "I'll just start writing something and see where it goes." I'm going to hate seeing the smug look on Dave's face if this trip report makes it to press. He'll be telling everybody, "I conned the Supreme Curmudgeon into writing a trip report."

No, he didn't! I got up before daylight today and drove to Nashville to watch our twelve-year-old grandson's Huntsville travel team play in two Ice Hockey games then drove home in the rain. Had a late dinner. So, bone tired I felt I needed a glass of the fermented grapes to relax. That alone was enough to impact my ancient gray matter, so I put pen to paper. I never know what the outcome will be.

Immediately I thought about the fact that Smoky Mountain region has an auction during the banquet. Suzanne and I usually make something to donate to that auction since the proceeds go to children's charities. Last year I wrote about

Smoky Mountain members Michael and Susannah Ishmael visiting us here in Huntsville and treating us to dinner at Rosie's restaurant. We committed to donating items for the auction. This year I only got an email from Michael reminding me about the auction. No dinner!

Smoky Mountain region moved Spring Thing back to The General Morgan Inn in Greeneville, Tennessee. The Inn is a member of the National Trust Historic Hotels of America and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Great site for a weekend PCA event. We have registered for the Concours and tour. We no longer participate in autocrossing. Reflexes and depth perception ain't as good as they used to be. Besides, Suzanne has more autocross trophies than I do. My ego can't stand any more of that.

### **Preparation**

Prep the car? Are you kidding? These regional events ain't nothing like those that PCA National puts on. The events are strictly low-key. For the Concours we'll go over the car a couple of days before we leave. Mainly we'll clean the interior by wiping the dust and vacuuming. Since Greeneville is about a four-and-a-half-hour drive from Huntsville, we'll clean the outside once we get there. The Concours class that we register for is judged on the overall cleanliness of the interior and exterior. No engine, trunk or undercarriage components are judged. Our fifty-eight-year-old Porsche ain't exactly a prom queen anymore so we just try to spruce her up the best we can.

We plan on departing for Greeneville on Thursday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>. My plan is to clean the car on Tuesday. Got to go out to the garage and get the old girl spiffed up a little bit. I'm just hoping she'll start. Previous owners Jeff and Nancy Frye called the car "Danny Boy" due to its Irish Green paint. I refer to it as a "she" since it's so temperamental.

As usual I didn't follow the plan. I cleaned the exterior on Tuesday and the interior on Wednesday. That's all the Concours prep the car will get until Friday. The car was basically clean, so I went over it with some spray-on car wash. Decided not to apply a coat of spray-on wax. Since it's always garaged it doesn't need a good coat of wax. Just enough impress the judges. Cleaning the glass inside and out is next. The hardest part is the inside of the rear window. This old body of mine ain't as agile as it used to be. The interior takes the longest to do.

Lots of nooks and crannies that can gather dirt and grime. I removed the Cocoa Mats and put in the small clear plastic mats. I've been known to forget items in the door pockets, so I checked them. Also took off the luggage rack and headlight guards. The fewer items in or on the car means fewer things for the judges to inspect. Usually, Suzanne and I work on this together, but she had other obligations. We'll definitely team up for the cleaning on Friday.

On Wednesday we packed the car with luggage, cleaning supplies, and donated items. Need to make sure we leave on time Thursday morning. Don't want to be late meeting the Schroettters in Scottsboro otherwise I'll hear about it the entire weekend.

At the February HOD dinner we happened to sit near Greg Bayuga and I started trying to convince him to attend Spring Thing. Greg didn't know that I'm the world's greatest BS artist, so he bought the story, hook, line and sinker. He said that he would go home and try to get permission from Romy. It worked! They registered that night!

Romy and Greg planned on driving to Greeneville on Friday. The Fowlers and Schroettters always travel on Thursday so we can have time to settle in and plan our Concours preparation. We will meet in Scottsboro at 8:30am so we can caravan together. This always leads to a protracted debate about who leads the caravan. You'd think with only two cars this would be a simple decision.

Not so! Dave is an ex-Naval officer and a natural leader. I am an ex-Navy enlisted man and a natural follower. But that issue has been resolved. It is a two-car tour and Dave is an HOD Certified Tour Leader (CTL) so he has to lead. I'm not qualified. I'm sure I will achieve victory over any disagreement.

### **Travel To Greeneville**

We arrive in Scottsboro with the Schroettters waiting at the agreed upon location. As soon as I shut off the engine Dave said, "You're leading!" "Not gonna happen," says I with utmost confidence. I've got my argument at the ready. Then Dave informed me that the instruments in the 928 had quit working. He wouldn't know what speed he was driving. "The car runs fine but no instrumentation," he said. "Doesn't matter," I replied. "Just keep up with traffic. You're a Certified

Tour Leader and I'm not certified so I can't lead." I had him up against the rails this time. Then Dave said, "I'm also the HOD Certified Tour Leader Coordinator/Trainer. By the authority vested in me I declare that you are now certified to be a Tour Leader!" Then I asked him, "Does that mean that I can lead official HOD tours?" "No!" he said. "This is just a temporary weekend certification."

I've been slam-dunked again. Then to add salt to the wound he said, "I'll be behind you the whole way to judge your tour leadership." We were halfway to Greeneville before it occurred to me that I should have asked to see the non-functioning instruments.

Normally, we can make that trip with about three-quarters of a tank of gas. As usual I'm always in a hurry to get where I'm going so I mostly kept the speedometer on between seventy-five and eighty on the Interstate. Sometimes creeping up to eighty-five. It always amazes me when I think about how many times those four cylinders are firing at that speed. Anyway, when we reached route 11E and got off the Interstate, I started thinking about gas. The gauge bounces around a lot. It uses a mechanical float in the tank. It shows more gas if you're facing uphill and less if downhill. The gauge was bouncing around a quarter tank so I figured we could make it the twenty miles to downtown Greeneville. Then it started dropping a little faster. I had this continuous internal debate about whether or not to stop. Dave didn't know how much gas he had since his instruments weren't working. Or so he says.

Still a few miles from Greeneville and I'm considering asking Suzanne to reach down to the lever on the firewall and switch it to "reserve". That's a carryover from the Volkswagen days when the cars didn't have gas gauges. I crossed my fingers and continued on to the hotel. After the Concours we followed Dave to a gas station a few miles away. The 356C gulped down ten and a half gallons. We were down to two and a half gallons of gas in the tank.

### **Spring Thing 2023**

This year Spring Thing is jointly co-chaired by Bob Southerland and Mike Parker. Bob joined PCA in 2005. Mike was originally a member of Tennessee Region when it covered the entire state. In 1974 he became a founding member of Smoky Mountain region. Registrar Suzan Bowman joined PCA in 1993. We were

anxious to get there and see what they and their team have put together for the weekend.

We pulled into the hotel parking garage about two p.m. Our rooms were ready, so we were able to check in early. After a short while other attendees started trickling in. We had a cocktail and dinner at the hotel in honor of the Schroetter's forty-eighth anniversary. Then we retired to our rooms to rest up for a full day of car cleaning. I know. I said that the car was clean enough. Well, that's not exactly the truth. For a Concours there's always something else to clean. And that's what we mostly did until Friday afternoon. Every time I think I've finished, Suzanne says, "Did you check..." Even after we moved the car to the staging area and just before the judging started, I thought of another area I had overlooked. It never ends!

We quit cleaning in time for the afternoon social hour held in the hotel lobby. The mayor of Greeneville showed up and made a speech to the group. He presented the Smoky Mountain leadership with commemorative coins.

### **Concours**

Saturday morning the Concours d'Elegance began at 9:00 a.m. The staging time is 7:00 a.m. A pretty fierce storm moved through during the night, and nobody was anxious to move their car until they could be sure that the rain was going to stop. It did! I complimented Mike Parker on arranging to have the rain stopped in time. He said, "I didn't do it. Bob Southerland controls everything in Greeneville, including the weather." The city of Greeneville normally blocks off the street next to the hotel for the Concours. Not so this year. The street was torn up and in the process of being remodeled. Instead, the Concours was held in the hotel remote parking lot. A good location, but not where the locals could easily walk through and view the cars. The Schroetters and Fowlers were the only HOD members to enter the Concours. The Bayugas decided to forgo that event but came by to watch.

## **Saturday Lunch**

A catered lunch was held at the City Garage Car Museum just a few blocks down from the hotel. The museum has an interesting collection of cars.....and gals. The museum's very diverse collection of cars represents many different makes and time periods. It includes a major exhibit about the DeLorean automobile, including DeLorean's desk and chairs. This is not the first time that Smoky Mountain region has had lunch at the museum and I'm still finding things that I didn't pick up on before. I've included the photo of our last visit to the museum. This really cute chick was sitting on a bench last time we were there and rebuffed my advances. She wasn't sitting on the bench this time. When I asked her whereabouts, they said that she was sitting in one of the cars. I went and found her, but she ignored me just like last time.



**Unknown local  
beauty with  
lecherous old man.**

## **Tour/Gimmick Rally**

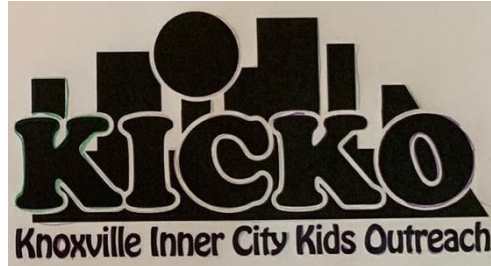
Ann and Dave Schroetter opted to drive the guided tour as did Suzanne and I. At the last minute we changed our minds and decided to go back to our room and check our eyes for light leaks. Greg and Romy Bayuga chose the Gimmick Rally. The Gimmick Rally provided some driving fun as the participants drove a rally route and participated in the gimmick part where they learned about local folklore. Later found out that Dave and Ann also changed their minds about the tour. Greg and Romy got lost on the Gimmick Rally and decided to look for a place to get some ice cream.

## **Autocross**

Well shucks! The HOD participants departed Greeneville Sunday morning, skipping the autocross. Nothing to report about that event.

## **Banquet**

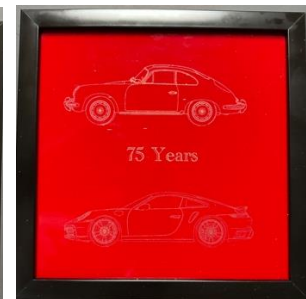
The Smoky Mountain folks conducted both a live and silent auction during the banquet Saturday evening. All proceeds from the auctions will go to children's charities. See list below.



In the past Suzanne and I have donated items from our hobby pursuits in support of the charity. I don't like to repeat donations, so this year we had to do a lot of mental gyrations to come up with something that, hopefully somebody would be willing to write a check for. Doesn't matter what the value of the item is. It's for children's charities and that's a good cause. We were drawing a blank about something to donate.

Thankfully, Porsche unknowingly planted the seed for an auction item. They announced their 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. So, I along with my creative consultant (Suzanne) decided on a laser-etched glass plaque commemorating Porsche's anniversary. We used a sheet of black glass and etched the image with a ten-watt Diode laser running at a thousand millimeters per minute. It took four hours and twelve minutes to complete the process.

We then took the glass to Frame World in Huntsville for a custom-built frame. First row, first picture below. That anniversary piece led to some other ideas for the charity and these additional pieces were also made and donated. They only got Hobby-Lobby frames. The item in the second row, fourth from left is not an etched piece. That's Suzanne's cross-stitched handiwork.



75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary



Six-Cylinder Engine

Coasters w/ SMR Badge



Three Engines

75 Years w/2 cars



75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Coasters

75 Years w/2 cars



Cross-Stitch

Suzanne also donated a recently completed crocheted Afghan. I had to explain to them Tennesseans that an Afghan is a fancy blanket. Not a Middle-Easterner. The cross-stitched piece is in French. I ain't never heard nobody from Tennessee speak Le Français. Suzanne is pretty good at speaking the language so she can interpret what it says.

There were some very nice door prizes and auction items. This year a professional auctioneer volunteered his services and that made it a lot more interesting. Total funds raised for the charities was \$8,275.00.

### Wrap-Up

We did pretty well in the Concours. Interior and exterior each have a seventy-point maximum score. If the judge finds a problem, he/she usually deducts a tenth of a point. Paul Burch gave us a 69.9 for the interior. Steve Kidd scored us with a 69.5 for the exterior. That gave us an overall score of 139.4 out of 140. Dave and Ann scored better. Much better! They got an overall score of 139.7. Three dings on the exterior and a perfect interior. Not sure, but I think Ann was responsible for the interior. Rich Neubauer was the timekeeper. The judges have four minutes to complete their review of the car. I reminded Rich that we had treated him and Carol to dinner when they were in Huntsville and maybe his stopwatch could be made to run a little faster. Nothing doing!

Dave and Ann were awarded a first-place trophy for their 928. Suzanne and I got a first-place trophy and the People's Choice trophy. That one is special because it's the other Concours participants who vote for it. Our sincere thanks to all of y'all.



I personally wanted a Grand Slam. That's First-Place, People's Choice, AND Judges Choice. This year the Judges Choice trophy was won by Allan and Rose Cox. For the second darn year in a row! Sure, their 1979 911SC is a magnificent car, but I wanted that Judges Choice trophy. Later, when talking to Spring Thing Co-Chairman Mike Parker I said, "Mike, just why do you think I donated all those items for charity?" Mike said, "Because you're a generous person." "No way!" says I. "I donated those things in an attempt to bribe the judging process. Obviously, it didn't work." Then Mike said, "I guess you just need to up the ante next year."



Suzanne and I want to express our sincere thanks to Bob, Mike, Suzan and the rest of their Smoky Mountain region team for giving us such a fun and enjoyable weekend.

A weekend of Porsches and people don't get no better than this. We expected it to be a great weekend event. It always is! This year Spring Thing attendees came from twelve regions and seven states. Attend it once and you meet new people. Attend twice and you meet more. By the third time there are no strangers. Any more than that and you've got "forever" friends.

Spring Thing 2024 will again be at the General Morgan Inn in Greeneville but back to its usual timeframe of late April. If any HOD members want to experience a fun weekend with Porsches and "Porsche People," you should mark it on your calendar for next year. April 26-27, 2024. We'll certainly be there.

**Mea Culpa**

In this trip report I made a comment about being “stubborn as a barn full of mules.” I never want to offend anyone or anything, except maybe newsletter editors. But I do want to offer my sincere apologies to any mule I might have offended. Suzanne said, “Don’t you want to apologize to our Tennessee friends over the comments you made about them?” Nah! They’ll forget it by next year and invite us back again.

### **Disclaimer**

Things quoted or stated in this document as actually said or happening may or may not be factual. The reader is hereby warned to consider the warped mental state of the author.