

2016 Annual Spring Mystery Run – Springfield, MA Area

By Brad Busque

This year's Spring Dust Off / Mystery Run was held in the Springfield MA area on May 1st. The group met at the Springfield Holiday Inn on April 30th, a nice Saturday Afternoon where we had a private room to meet and greet, have a few drinks and get ready to depart for a 7:00 pm dinner.

Dinner was at the Backyard Grille, a very short walk from the host hotel. The restaurant served Burgers, ribs and hearty American eats in a convenient location with a large bar and outdoor tables. Our group of twenty one members was seated at an indoor table large enough to accommodate everyone. The Backyard Grille offered a dinner special that gave you a bottle of wine with dinner for only 10 bucks, which many members took advantage of. If you couldn't finish your wine (a problem most didn't have) the waitress would recork it for the short travel back to the hotel. After dinner we hung out in the hotel lobby and chatted a bit before retiring for the night

Sunday we awoke to a very overcast day, but a very good complimentary breakfast in the hotel dining room. Breakfast was a buffet which included table service of juice and coffee, and was served on china plates and included real silverware, which were nice perks.



By the time breakfast was complete a light rain had started outside and continued off and on thru out the day. The group met up in the hotel lobby for rules, instructions and to greet the day trippers who arrived that morning. The participants were started at 10 AM from the rear of the hotel parking lot and had a 14.5-mile route to complete thru Long Meadow MA, to our final destination at the Springfield Museums.



The first stop on the route was an old Dust Off tradition, an 1800's cemetery where members had to locate the Lincoln's family grave site and "urn" some points by adding up the ages of two of the family members buried on the site.

Next stop was at Maureen's Sweet Shoppe in East Longmeadow, MA to answer some trivia questions and locate chocolate covered Oreo cookies in a display case with the CAMO / 4 Season / Nash car club logos present. Club members were greeted by Maureen Basile, the owner of Maureen's Sweet Shoppe, who quit her job as a lawyer to follow her dreams.

The shop is stocked with lollipops, gummy treats and toffees. Basile makes all the chocolates, including a number of truffle flavors, chocolate-covered potato chips, "Ultimate Oreos" with caramel and mini M&Ms and more. The shop is also a "popcorn emporium" with homemade kettle corn flavors, from caramel to cinnamon white chocolate, with samples available for customers to try.

After getting our cookies we were directed to Fairfield Street where members had to identify the childhood home of Theodor Seuss Geisel, a.k.a. Dr. Seuss. The house at 74 Fairfield Street wasn't hard to spot, as it wore a large Cat in the Hat plaque.

Theodor Seuss Geisel's family moved into the house at 74 Fairfield St. in the Forest Park neighborhood in 1906, when he was 2 years old. They stayed there until 1943, after Dr. Seuss became a well-known cartoonist and around the time he started making propaganda films for the United States' war effort.

Geisel himself lived in the house until he graduated college at Dartmouth, according to Historic Buildings of Massachusetts. The Springfield Museums has a slightly different timeline, saying he left the city when college began.

Historians have pointed out numerous references to his Springfield upbringing in his later works, including his first of many children's books, "And To Think That I Saw It On Mulberry Street."



Ah yes, Mulberry Street...which we passed along our route. Members were also asked to identify the "street made famous by Springfield's favorite son" along the way to the final destination. Interestingly, on the corner of Mulberry Street is Milton Bradley Elementary School, named after the founder of the Springfield MA based Milton Bradley Game Company and longtime Springfield resident. This made for another trivia question along the way.

Members started arriving at the museum about 11 AM. Sandy and Brad Busque collected the travel questions and distributed a new set of questions for the Museums. The Springfield Museums offered access to four world-class museums and the Dr. Seuss National Memorial Sculpture Garden all under a single discounted admission for Dust Off participants.



The “Quad”, as the complex of four museums is called, contains: George Walter Vincent Smith Art Museum, Springfield Science Museum, Michele and Donald D’Amour Museum of Fine Arts and Lyman and Merrie Wood Museum of Springfield History. The question sheets required visits to each Museum to be able to answer all questions.

Most members really seemed to enjoy the Lyman and Merrie Wood Museum of Springfield History, which houses the Indian Motorcycle Collection, the largest collection of Indian cycles and memorabilia in the world, the Firearms Collection which includes more than 1600 firearms, with the largest collection of Smith & Wesson guns in the world. The Automobile Collection includes an 1899 Knox, a 1901 Crestmobile, a 1925 Rolls-Royce roadster, and a 1928 Rolls-Royce roadster, all built in Springfield MA. Also found in this museum is the Friendly Ice Cream exhibit and Big Y Supermarket exhibit, both containing artifacts from their first stores.

Once the tour of the Museums was complete at 12:30, we headed to our private dining room at Max’s Tavern at the newly renovated, state-of-the-art Basketball Hall of Fame for lunch and drinks. Max's Tavern menu featured contemporary American cuisine including some of Max's favorite "Chop House" classics. While lunch was being prepared we handed out awards and had a brief club meeting. After lunch we said our good-byes to the group, and headed home after a fun weekend.

Awards for the Run were as follows:

Most Correct Answers: Matt and Bill Thomas

Best Mileage: Matt and Bill Thomas

Best Time: Charlie Tollefson

Worst Mileage: Jim and Donna Peloquin

Worst Time: Bill and Nancy Leonard

Thanks to Brad & Sandy Busque for planning this successful event. And thanks to all that participated.