

Back to the Beach 2009

The license plates told the story: at least one Marine was there (USMC64), and at least one beach-loving golfer (SEA + TEE). People from as far away as Indiana who love their Corvettes (OBSESN, MY1982, OURUBY) zoomed into scenic Old Orchard Beach, Maine for The Sixth Annual Back to the Beach weekend, which took place June 11-14, 2009. Organized beautifully by Ralph Quaglietta and Sandie Bergeron, and despite a bit of rain, the weekend provided over 200 Corvette enthusiasts with all great fun, camaraderie and excellent cuisine that we have come to expect from these weekends.

Once again, Ralph and Sandie arranged for an extra day on Thursday, with nothing planned except lodging. This allowed for some quiet time to do private sightseeing or shopping before the busy weekend of Corvette events began.

On Friday, June 12th, those who did not arrive early checked in around noon, and some took part in the Grand Prix Racing event planned. Afterwards, there were welcoming wine and cheese parties at each motel. Shortly thereafter, everyone went into the inestimable Captain's Gallery Restaurant for the wonderful Italian Buffet dinner people have come to expect. This year, the Galley expanded the menu to include calamari as an appetizer, which was a resounding success! Music was presented by Richie O and company during the meal and afterwards, for dancing.

Saturday, June 13th began back at the Galley for their Breakfast Buffet, which was followed by the Corvette Display in the parking lot. Several vendors had set up in the lot, including the ever popular GalliShirts (Corvette apparel), and Kim's Gold Dust, featuring Corvette jewelry. Adam's Polishes also had a very popular booth set up, as did Marcel's Corvette Shop from Albany, NY.

The imagination and good humor of the Corvette owners attend-

"The Last Straw" band providing the music entertainment on the beach!





Vettes everywhere.

ing were evident in the many clever license plates to be found in the Galley's lot. "YWE-WRK" and "SPNT-401K" gave a nod to the investment needed to keep a nice Corvette, while "SMOKEN", "SOQWIK", "ILUVHP" and "FASTFWD" obviously enjoyed their speed! Plates that make you wonder about the "rest of the story" included "SLITHER", "2BUBBAS" and "VULTURE". Of course, there was the classic question presented by "Y"...the only possible answer being "Why not?" Life is short; drive a Corvette!

Something new was added this year with Richie O. stepping out from behind his DJ set-up and into the live band he plays with. "The Last Straw" entertained folks until just before noon, when they left to set up for a live performance from noon until 4:00 at the Atlantis Motel. Beachfront music and dancing: another innovation from Ralph and Sandie!

Some attendees took the Mystery Cruise with Bob & Odie, which ended up at Blacksmith's Winery in South Casco, Maine, and the Portland Light House. Others took a self guided road tour, and many just hit the beach and enjoyed the live music.

At 4:00 on Saturday afternoon almost everyone lined up in the parking lot at the Captain's Galley for the annual Corvette Parade around Old Orchard Beach, arranged and escorted by the Old Orchard Beach Police Department, in the person of Lt. Tim DeLuca, with the able assistance of many of his uniformed patrol officers. This year's route was somewhat abbreviated due to the high volume of traffic in town, but it was still enthusiastically received by the townspeople and visitors, many of

Say you saw it in



"Back to the Beach" Wine and cracker social where else, but on the beach!

whom lined the sidewalks, waving and applauding as the Corvettes paraded past.

Saturday evening found everyone back at the restaurant for the Awards Banquet Buffet: another glorious meal cooked and served by some of the nicest folks in town. At the Awards Banquet, Ralph and Sandie presented trophies to thank people who had contributed greatly to the success of the weekend. John Zofchak of Boston Salads, whose company sponsored the very nice polo shirts given to each participant, received not only his award, but a sincere "thank you" round of applause from everyone present.

Also acknowledged were Howard and Robin Sousa of Sousa Plumbing and Heating, Elaine Kemp of Corvette Mike New England, Richard Ouellette of "Richie O. & Co." GalliShirts & Sports Apparel, the motels hosting the attendees, and the Old Orchard Beach Police Department. The staff at the Captain's Galley received a very well deserved round of applause from the attendees. Their service was, once again, efficient and overwhelmingly pleasant. There is now doubt that we are all welcome at the Galley!

The winners of the Grand Prix racing event were Janet Mills, Ernie Nastari, and a gentleman named Bert.

Numerous trophies were awarded to cars selected by celebrity judges, and the award for Best Club Participation was won by the New England Corvette Club, which has won the award four of the five years it

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has attended, and tied for the award the fifth year.

John and Toni Kniola, who drove 1,035 miles from VeVay, Indiana, took the award for driving the longest distance to attend. Second place, went to Bob and Kathy Kroupa, who drove 1,022 miles from Indian River, Michigan. Congratulations and a hearty New England welcome to both couples!

"The Divas," (Elaine Kemp, Mal Smith and Arlene Martley) presented their annual award to Judy Pitasi for her 1972 red roadster with 157,000 miles. The Divas decided to honor a woman owner this year, and chose Judy for her passion for her car and her hard work on it over the 21 years she has owned it.

A generous 50-50 award and an array of door prizes were given out, including free weekends at all three of the participating motels, and one free "Back to the Beach 2010" weekend, thank to the generosity of John Zofchak of Boston Salads.

Sunday, June 14th, began with the task of packing all that stuff back into the Corvettes! Somehow, what we brought with us seemed to expand, and the fact that it was raining continuously, if not hard, made packing the cars all the more difficult. After folks got it all arranged everyone took off for one last breakfast buffet at the Galley, lots of conversation with other Corvette folks, and special thanks to Ralph and Sandie for another great weekend at the beach. As the last Corvettes pulled out of the lot, two more plates said it all "C YA" and "BAHBYE." We'll be back next year!