

# NECC Back to the Beach 2016

By M. Persson, New England Corvette Club



Ever see a swan moving smoothly over the surface of a pond, gracefully moving from point to point, seemingly without effort? If you could submerge your vision and watch her feet, you'd see that the swan is paddling like crazy, hard at work to get things done and go places!

Those of us who are lucky enough to be able to attend Ralph Quaglietta's and Sandie Bergeron's annual Back to the Beach event in Old Orchard Beach, Maine only get to see what's happening on top of the pond. All the hard work of paddling goes on behind the scenes, often unseen, unappreciated, unnoticed. It's time to peek

below the surface and see what, exactly, goes on before everyone arrives!

Ralph and Sandie begin work on their annual June event on July 1st. As I write this, they are hard at work on Back to the Beach 2017. Everything has to be arranged, coordinated, checked, and double-checked. There is always something to re-align. This past June, for example, they had to move all the meals and meetings to a totally new venue, The Clambake Restaurant, establishing new relationships and planning menus, seating, awards ceremonies and raffle table set-ups in a space they'd never worked with before.

They coordinate with Shari MacDonald of Old Orchard Beach 365, an organization of community volunteers who work with the town to promote their town. Shari helps them plan the Old-Fashioned Clambake that has become a very popular happening on the Thursday afternoon that precedes the "official" opening of Back to the Beach on Friday. She also helps plan the Saturday afternoon Corvette Display, a giant cruise-in downtown that closes Main Street completely for two hours,



*Say you saw it in*

allowing curb-to-curb parking and easy pedestrian access to all the Corvettes that take part. This year there were over 280 beautiful vehicles spanning not only the wide boulevard but also the 63 years that Corvettes have been part of the American scene.

The Old Orchard Beach town council is always consulted to make sure the event follows all local ordinances and doesn't conflict with other happenings. Ralph and Sandie work closely with Deputy Chief Timothy B. DeLuca of the OOB Police Department to plan the annual parade through town that follows the downtown display. Dept. Chief DeLuca has worked with Back to the Beach for years and has always offered great support, arranging for his officers to patrol the downtown display and to lead in safety the parade that follows it.



If the folks attending B2B decide they'd like to venture out of Old Orchard Beach, Ralph and Sandie have arranged for self-guided tours. There are seven listed on the Back to the Beach website, and all of them have been checked out by...you guessed it...Ralph and Sandie.

In 2016 they implemented a new addition to the weekend: a food drive. They asked everyone to bring some non-perishable food items to the event to benefit local food banks. Easy enough, right? Guess who contacted the local food bank, arranged for a collection time and point, and

planned for a truck to pick up all the donated food? Just one more detail that they gladly take on to help others.

Luckily for them both, they have some help. They have a loyal crew of about eight friends who help them run the weekend. These good folks do everything from setting up the raffle tables to selling the raffle tickets to running last-minute errands. They help deliver perfectly organized goody bags, posters, dash plaques and the correctly-sized shirts to every hotel room in use for the weekend.

Approximately ten organizations, companies, and individuals contribute prizes for the raffle table yearly. These prizes all have to be stored, transported, unloaded, packaged, organized and arranged on tables at the last minute. Sandie and the helpers do this every year. By the way, every year they raise around \$1500 to donate to charity with this event. There is never any profit made or kept! Costs are covered, and everything else is given away.

*Say you saw it in*

Little details count, too, and all can involve visits, phone calls, previews and double-checked confirmations. Shall we all cruise out for ice cream on Thursday night after the clambake? Great! But you can't just arrive with 50 cars at Fielder's Choice Ice Cream without setting it up in advance, making sure there is adequate directed parking with several volunteers to help, and calling the manager to give the place a heads-up that they'll need extra staff that evening! It might even involve a call to the local police to let them know what is going on...no surprises needed!



Want to dance on Friday and Saturday nights? You'll need a DJ, and that means heading out to hear various ones, checking the availability of your choice, arranging for space in the dining room, making sure all needed equipment is at hand and then being there to deal with any problems.

Everyone likes to be appreciated, and nobody more so than the Corvette owner who prides him/herself on keeping a beautiful car immaculate. Time for trophies means time spent to select a design and get them made up, time to decide on categories of awards, and time to arrange for "judges" to pick their choices. It even means monitoring which Corvette club has the most attendees and when that distinction bounces back and forth between two clubs, making sure there are two trophies, just in case, as happened in June this year! It's a tiny detail but one that was greatly appreciated by the members of both clubs. This sort of attention to the details is what Ralph and Sandie specialize in, and all below the surface.



In addition to liking appreciation, everyone likes to be fed! This year's change to the Clambake Seafood Restaurant (they do great chicken and beef, too!) was a very good move. Manager and Chef Don Roth said that he and his team (he had an extra 6 people work an extra four hours each day) worked for a week planning the menus, buying the food,

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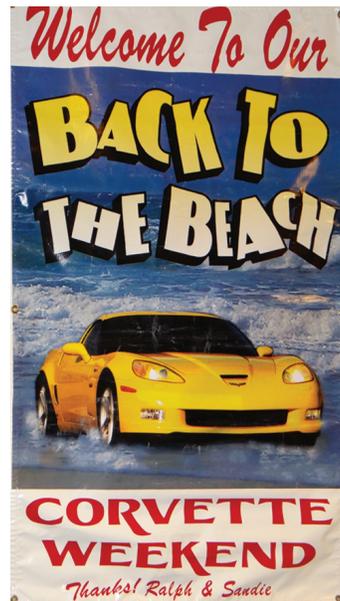
blocking off “Corvette Only” parking in their lot and acquiring the extra tables and chairs they needed to handle the crowds! Then they cooked for two full days to prepare the food needed to

serve buffet-style breakfasts and dinners on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. With seven or eight entrée choices and three or four dessert choices, plus sides, salads and beverages, Chef Don outdid himself in the kitchen! The food was tasty, plentiful, and served at exactly the right temperature by an extremely friendly staff. He said he was “nervous” getting ready for such a large group, but everything worked out very well and Back to the Beach is going “Back to The Clambake” next year!

Is all this food making you sleepy? Well, head on back to one of the six motels filled up this year by Corvette owners. The Sea Drift, the Executive, the Windsong, The Sandpiper, the Alouette and the Atlantis all have worked for a number of years with Ralph and Sandie to provide a cordial welcome to Old Orchard Beach. What Lisa Mokarzel, manager of the Atlantis, said goes, I’m sure, for the other five motels, too! It takes a week of her entire crew working full days cleaning and prepping all 44 of the rooms to get things ready for check-in. They go through each room thoroughly, replacing worn items and making any needed repairs. They even clean and sweep the parking lot completely to make sure the Corvettes (Lisa calls them “those beautiful cars!”) have a safe berth.



It’s a good thing there are so many good places to stay because Ralph and Sandie are back and forth from their homes in New Hampshire and Massachusetts at least five times between the end of one Back to the Beach and the beginning of another. The amount of travel and work they do is tremendous, and because of it, like the swan, the weekend moves along smoothly and effortlessly for those attending. Think of Ralph and Sandie next time you spot a gliding swan, and say thanks for all they do behind-the-scenes.



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