

Spring Thing 2019

Lee Fowler

Two days until departure to Greeneville, Tennessee for Smoky Mountain Region's annual Spring Thing weekend event. By the way, that is not the city of Greenville, Tennessee near Nashville. Notice the extra "e" in the spelling of the name of the city hosting Spring Thing. As far as we know only two Heart O' Dixie entrants will be making the five-hour journey to Greeneville. That would be the Schroetters and Fowlers, in their Boxster Spyder and Carrera, respectively. The event actually starts on Friday but there is limited indoor parking at the General Morgan Inn so we go up a day early.

The original structure at the site of the General Morgan Inn was erected in 1790 as the DeWoody Tavern. From the late 1820s to the 1860s, the establishment was known as Bell Tavern. Joshua Lane operated the tavern during the Civil War, when it was better known as the Lane House. Early on the morning of September 4, 1864, Joshua's wife, a Union sympathizer, reportedly spotted Confederate General John Hunt Morgan as he tried to escape Union soldiers and pointed out his hiding place. During the ensuing gun battle, the colorful Kentucky Calvary officer, popularly known as the "Thunderbolt of the Confederacy," was shot and killed not far from the rear of the tavern. In 1920, Mrs. E.J. Brumley purchased the hotel and began full operation of the newly renamed Hotel Brumley. In 1948, Judd Brumley opened "The General Morgan Room," a supper-club style private dining area adjacent to the main dining room on the first floor. The General Morgan Room was an instant success and quickly became the region's most popular and prestigious location for formal affairs. The Hotel Brumley ceased operation in May 1981. For many years the historic building sat vacant. After nine years of planning and fund-raising, the restored General Morgan Inn and Conference Center opened for business in September 1996. It has been a favorite spot for Spring Thing for a number of years.



Pre-registration had forty-six cars registered. Eight regions are represented...one each from Carolinas, Gold Coast, and Wilderness Trail. Two from Heart O' Dixie. Three each from Florida Citrus and Tennessee. Four from Peachstate and thirty-one from Smoky Mountain. A total of eighty-seven individuals.

This year the Fowlers are cutting back even more. No rally this time. We had gotten to the point where we got lost and never finished the rally. My fallback position was to find an ice cream shop. But with my new diet and exercise regimen that's no longer an option. Dave is concerned about how he's going to be able to clean the car as he's still recovering from back surgery. I told Ann at the HOD dinner that she could clean the car and claim any trophy they might win. She said, "I DON'T WANT A TROPHY!" She didn't really yell back at me. I just added the all caps for emphasis. So I asked Ann if she had any strong opinions about Concours. Flashback: At the Parade a couple years ago, Ann observed a Concours for the first time. She commented,

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“Those crazy people are using stupid Q-Tips to clean their stupid door handles. Now fast forward to Winterfest and she’s borrowing Q-Tips from us to clean the door handles of the Spyder. But that was a rare and unusual event. She will sit and watch Dave as he cleans the car but joining in the effort is not something she’s willing to do.

Easter Sunday was the weekend before Spring Thing. The Schroetters live up on Keel mountain near Gurley. Their estate is watched over by Sophie, their Sheltie/Border Collie. Sophie is their official greeter. She must be a sound sleeper because sometime during the night the Easter Bunny paid them a visit. That’s to be expected, after all where else would all that candy and colored eggs come from. That sweet, cuddly, little rabbit has warmed the hearts of many people with its Easter goodies. But this Easter Bunny had a different idea for Ann’s Easter treat. It didn’t leave eggs or candy, but it did leave something that Ann can certainly use. See photo to on the right.



She obviously put them to good use as evidenced by the photos below.



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This is Jamie Parton. He's a member of Smoky Mountain region and is part of the Spring Thing team. He's also co-chairman for next year's Spring Thing. We've known Jamie for a couple of years now. I finally got up enough nerve to ask him a question. I said, "Jamie, do you think you can get us a couple of tickets to Dollywood?" He said, "What?" I said, "You know, the amusement park that Dolly Parton owns. I know that's asking a lot, but I thought maybe you could put the touch on her (figuratively speaking of course) for a couple of free tickets." He replied, "Pardon me, (pun intended) but I'm not related to her." I'm thinking, he probably gets a lot of requests like that so that's his standard answer. "Jamie, are you telling me that all the Partons in Tennessee are "not" related?" "That's right!" He said. "I don't know her. I wish I did. I'd like to get some free tickets myself." I guess I have to believe him but if it was me, I'd be doing some ancestry research to see if I could find a link and get some free tickets to Dollywood from possibly a very distant cousin. Come to think about it, he don't look much like her, does he.



Our past Zone 3 Representative, Vic Rola showed up for Spring Thing in a brand-new Cayenne. Vic normally brings his 1972 911E, which is a very special car that he's owned for seventeen years. Sometimes he brings it on a trailer and sometimes he drives it to these weekend events. You can always tell when Vic approaches 'cause that 911E has an almost straight through exhaust. Loud? You bet. At the 2007 Parade in Charlotte, North Carolina the city closed off a number of city streets for the attendees to showcase their cars. Vic had a large Wolfsburg Rally magnetic display on the hood of his car. He was very surprised when Dr. Peter Porsche and his Executive VP of Human Resources, worldwide walked up and asked to take a picture of his car. Vic of course said yes. This was a time when the Porsche and Volkswagen companies were at odds with one another. Dr. Porsche explained that he wanted to take the picture back to Germany and show the two companies that Porsche and Volkswagen could get along.

There's a lot of history associated with that car. Vic and the car were sort of "bonded to the hip". Or maybe "butt and seat". So it was a shock to learn that the two had parted. Right! Vic sold the car. On the right is a picture of Vic on the autocross course at last year's Parade with his very unique car. But here's the good news. You can see the car for yourself as it's now in Thomas Trissl's personal collection and will be on display in June during the Uber Region Fest.



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It's nice to be indoors when cleaning the cars for the Concours. Wash the car on Monday, clean the interior on Tuesday, pack on Wednesday and head out early Thursday morning. Friday will be spent with the detail cleaning and socializing with friends we only see a couple times a year. Plus, it's guaranteed that the person who rides shotgun in the Boxster Spyder will hightail it to the very large antique shop located nearby. We're talking three floors of antiques and collectibles. She even corralled the other Heart O' Dixie attendees last year to accompany her. Thankfully, neither the Spyder nor the Carrera can carry too much after being loaded with luggage and cleaning stuff. No room for antiques.

Just as last year the Fowlers and Schroetters parked next to each other in the General Morgan garage. Suzanne and I arrived about 1:30pm on Thursday and were the first attendees to get there. We were registered and sitting in the lobby when Vic Rola and Jackie Isreal arrived. Vic said, "Are we going to have to come to Spring Thing on Wednesday just to get here before y'all." They live in Jefferson City, Tennessee which is only a stone's throw from Greeneville. Next came Dick Kjellson plus Danny and Cathy Saxton from Peachstate. They came a day early to pre-run the rally route. The Schroetters pulled in shortly after and then much later came Steve and Liz Baum. Steve and Liz were long time HOD members with Steve serving as an officer before they pulled up stakes and moved to Georgia. Which caused me a problem since Steve was my favorite target for abuse in my trip reports.

We all washed our cars with the equipment provided by the hotel then adjourned to the lobby for some liquid refreshment and a lot of socializing. Morning came early but we elected to get plenty of rest for the strenuous task of cleaning the car for the Concours. Note: That comment is going to get me in a lot of trouble 'cause our president is trying to convince our HOD members that entering a Concours is fun. Which of course, it is. The Schroetters were already at it when we got to the garage Friday morning. I thought it was an apparition when I saw Ann in the car and actively cleaning the interior. And not just with a Q-Tip, although she did have a handful of them.

Suzanne spent most of her time cleaning the interior while I focused on the wheels and exterior of the car. She also spot checks the exterior to see if there's anything I've missed. Missing spots is easy to do indoors when you're using artificial lights. We have small portable LED lights but there's no substitute for natural sunlight. About three-quarters of the way through cleaning the car a rainstorm came up with high winds. It blew rain right onto the front of the car. Couldn't move it 'cause the garage was full. Also, it got very cold and that wind cut right through our clothing. Who would have thought we'd need jackets in late April while cleaning a car in a garage.? But we got the job done. I re-cleaned the exterior with spray-on car wash then went over it with spray-on wax. Saturday morning we will have an hour and a half to move the car to the staging area and complete our final cleaning. Guaranteed there will be some "touch up" areas that we'll see in the daylight. But, truth be known, an hour and a half is more than enough time and we'll be doing a lot of visiting with friends from the other regions.

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Oops! I got ahead of myself. About midafternoon Friday we had cleaned about all that we could do. So we did the next logical thing. We took a nap! Friday afternoon everybody convenes in the very large hotel lobby for fraternizing, cocktails, and food. Since the “finger food” is provided as part of the event we make that our evening meal as does most everybody else. The lobby is right next to the bar and the hotel also sets up a portable bar in the lobby itself since there are so many people needing to “wet their whistle.” Here is a couple of attendees impatiently waiting for the bartender to take their order. No thanks to Dave Schroetter for catching them in the act.



Saturday morning came way too early, but we had to get the car to the Concours staging area at 7:30am. The city of Greeneville blocks off the street next to the hotel for the Concours. We spent about an hour of the hour and a half allotted going over the car to see if we missed anything. It’s amazing how easy it is to miss spots of dirt on the body or lint on the carpet. Of course, some things should be obvious to remove from the car. For instance, last year Ann left a Coke bottle under her seat. The judge found it, much to Dave’s dismay. But you get to the point where you have to say, “enough is enough”. We did that with about twenty minutes left before judging started. Dave and Ann did also. At 9:00 it was announced that all cleaning had to stop. Dave had walked up to our car and sat down next to me. He said, “I walked back towards my car and saw a very visible dirt spot. I hope the exterior judge doesn’t see it.” We won’t get the results until the banquet Saturday night.

Lunch was served on the second-floor patio and then those participating in the rally lined up at the hotel portico. Dave and Ann elected to drive around for some sightseeing and a little shopping. Suzanne and I walked to a nearby antique store; then walked around looking at all the very old buildings that make up downtown Greeneville.

The social and banquet was back on the patio, with the social starting at five o’clock and the buffet dinner at seven. It was a relaxing evening talking to all the friends we only get to see once or twice a year. Every time we attend one of these events you wouldn’t believe it had been months since the last time. Everybody just picks up like it was yesterday.

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Suzanne and I sat at the same table with Dave and Ann. The Concours trophies were announced first, followed by the rally trophies. I leaned over to Dave and told him that if both our names were called then I wanted to have someone take a picture of the four of us. Dave replied that my name would probably be called but not his. Dave's car got pretty dirty the weekend before on the tour to Shelbyville. I didn't drive the Carrera on the tour for that very reason. So Dave had a whole lot of cleaning to do in a short period of time. He wasn't optimistic about his chances of winning a trophy. We both chose to enter the "Street" class, which only the interior and exterior are judged. My class was one of the first announced, and Suzanne and I won First in Class. We lost a tenth of a point for minor rock chips on the front bumper. There was apparently some lint on the passenger seat and that cost us a tenth of a point. And another tenth was deducted for something the judge found on the passenger's side wheel well carpeting. Note that the two interior problems were on the "passengers" side. Our resulting score was 139.7 out of a possible 140. A few minutes later another class was announced. First in Class, Dave Schroetter. Wow! Dave and Ann had a chip on the passenger door and a scuff mark on the front air intake. Those cost them two tenths of a point. They also got dinged for "something" on the dashboard and fender well housing. The glass surfaces on the inside had some streaks. Their exterior score was 69.8 out of 70. For the interior they scored a 69.7. Total for the Spyder was 139.5 out of 140. Good enough for a first in class trophy. We had former HOD member Steve Baum take our photo. Steve didn't do too bad with trophies either, taking first in class and judges' choice. Steve and Liz also took home a rally trophy.



Can't have a trip report about Spring Thing without mentioning Rick Berry, owner and operator of Eurosport in Knoxville. Rick is the Autocross chairman and major contributor to the "goodie" bag given to every entry. His lovely wife Janis couldn't attend this year and was greatly missed.



Spring Thing has been held at the General Morgan Inn every year since 2014. But the size and available rooms limit the number of people that can be accommodated. Next year Spring Thing will move to Johnson City, Tennessee, just a short drive further up the road. Rich McGowen and Jamie Parton will take over from Matt Fischer as co-chairmen for Spring Thing 2020. Accommodations will be at the Carnegie Hotel. It has a five-level garage and the Concours will be held on the top level. Smoky Mountain region is considering having multiple tours available instead of a rally. This

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will enable attendees to enjoy the spring scenery in the Tennessee mountains. Something impossible to do during a rally. The dates for Spring Thing 2020 will be May 1st, 2nd, and 3rd. We'll be making our hotel reservations soon.

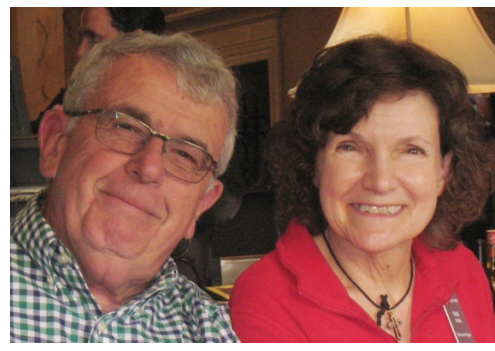
I have included a number of photos of some of the attendees.



Matt Fischer, Smoky Mountain & Spring Thing Chairman



Vaughn Smith, President, Smoky Mountain



Deems and Vickie Riddle, Tennessee



Steve and Liz Baum, Peachstate



Dave and Ann Schroetter, Heart O' Dixie



Matt Fischer, Smoky Mountain



Suzan Bowman, Smoky Mountain & National



Cathy and Danny Saxton, Peachstate

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Concours Judge



Suzanne Fowler, Heart O' Dixie,
Deems Riddle, Tennessee



Greg Debord,
Smoky
Mountain



Jeff Frye,
Tennessee.
Former owner of
Fowler 356C



Nancy Frye,
Tennessee, wants
the 356C back.



Greg Debord's 914-6



Carrera ready for judging



Depot street reserved for Smoky Mountain region Concours

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Packed and ready to return to “Sweet Home Alabama”