

ITHF: The Way to Go
JOHN and MARGARET STUCKEY
Moama, New South Wales, Australia

A trip of a lifetime nearly turned in to a complete disaster for John and Margaret Stuckey, but with the help of ITHF Rotarians, they did have a wonderful holiday to the Eastern US, and they did get home safely.

The story starts some time before departure when John developed a health problem which continued to worsen as the holiday progressed. Unknown to anyone at the time was the fact that the problem was caused by some medication he was taking. By the time they boarded the plane to fly back to Australia, John was in a terrible state and on arrival was taken to hospital. After three months, John was steadily on the road to recovery but with a long way still to go. He suggests that no one should embark on a large trip without being fully fit, even though their doctor says they will be fine. Just this week (January 2009) he is nearly clear of infection.

With incredible assistance of good friends and ITHF members JIM and ALICE JOHNSON in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, we set up a car trip starting in Murfreesboro. Jim and Alice loaned us a Volvo which we aptly named Jim and a GPS which we called Alice. The trip itself was fantastic, going from the charm of the south, along the outer banks and on to the fantastic Williamsburg, through the Smokey mountains via Ouray caverns to Laurel near Washington where we were shown all the highlights of the Capital including a tour of Capital Hill, which was organized through Senator Obama's staff by SUSIE and PHIL KOMORNICK. Margaret and John also attended a meeting of Susie's Rotary Club which was held at Grand Central Station. Phil took us everywhere in this most interesting and historic place, and he took us to Baltimore where we had our one and only taste of Dungeness Crabs, the food highlight of our trip.



Jim and Alice Johnson

From Washington we went to New Jersey and stayed with DICK and LEE IZACSON. There among other things we visited both Princeton University and Princeton township.



Margaret and John with Phil Komornick



*Milnes and Stuckeys celebrate
Margaret's birthday*

After that, north to Montpelier, Vermont, and GEORGE and LINDA MILNE to see the changing of the leaves. This was indeed an extraordinary happening. We also took in a tour of the Granite Mine, which was started in part by George Milne's father whose picture proudly hangs on the wall. Then to the amazing cemetery. Everyone should see the headstones made of granite in the shape of cars, and a Maple syrup farm run by a man with an accent that had Margaret absolutely fascinated. A true local.

We then drove down through a wonderful part of America to Portland Maine whose famous lobster is not as good as the Australian Crayfish. No discussion on this statement is allowed.

At Boston we stayed with DEBORA and WALTER TELLIS PALLADINO. We had a wonderful time there too and just loved Boston. A visit to Fenway Park with a seat behind the Green Monster a day after the Red Sox won a game of the World Series was memorable for a baseball fanatic like John.

From Boston to Rhode Island and Dick and Liz Anderson. Rhode Island is a lovely area, too and John was quick to point out that this was where the Australians took the America's Cup off the New York Yacht Club after 100 years. He noted that Dick was strangely quiet about this subject.



John with Dick Anderson

On to White Plains New York and a visit to the Big Apple. Jim Johnson had previously arranged a tour through the New York Stock Exchange which was fascinating. Who knew about the events that were to follow?

Our hosts, Jo and Joe Falcone made sure that we saw as much as we could of New York in the time available. Jo's ability to get Joe to park right in the middle of Manhattan to buy theatre tickets was a highlight. We attended a White Plains Rotary meeting and managed to take in two Broadway shows as well as take in the sights of New York.



Leaving New York we headed straight for Murfreesboro and Jim and Alice Johnson in an effort to get John well enough to travel home.

There is no doubt in our minds that I.T.H.F. tripping is the way to go, and we are amazed at the number of members who never use the service. Had it not been for the efforts of all our hosts, the trip may easily have ended in disaster. In turn, it only goes to show what a great organization Rotary is.