

Trip to Canada

From Rod Dawson

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Bright headlights pulled into the parking lot at the Senior Center. Grey heads and grey beards dragged luggage to the growing pile to be loaded onto the bus. Soon the gleaming bus appeared. We set out toward Mt. Laurel, NJ. We spent the night in Virginia for the first night's stop.

The next morning we headed for Liberty Park, NJ. From there we could see Ellis Island, the Statue of Liberty and the New York City skyline. The railroad station from whence the early immigrants fanned out across their new nation is now abandoned but is kept as a reminder of earlier days. We took pictures and left for Montreal. We all identified ourselves at the border and were actually permitted to enter Canada.



During breakfast the next morning in Montreal, we picked up Jacques, our guide. Jacques had a dry sense of humor and he was not very familiar with Montreal, since he lived in Québec. He had a habit of telling Joe, our bus driver, "Turn here" in the middle of intersections. When Joe missed the turn, Jacques would wave his arm and order a U-turn, which was impossible with the large bus.



We visited Notre Dame Sanctuary, a beautiful church in a city filled with churches. The interior is done in hand-carved wood! This makes for exceptional acoustics. Luciano Pavarotti has even performed here. The chapel behind the sanctuary is where Celine Dion was married.

Lunch was in the underground. This is a three-story "cellar" that spreads under almost all of Montreal. During cold winters people can go from home to work without going into the cold outdoors. Jacques took us to a beautiful restaurant for dinner. Arriving there was a real adventure. Roads were under construction and our driver was unable to make the U-turns Jacques demanded. We finally parked about five blocks away and walked to the restaurant through a misty rain.

After some light shopping the next morning, we departed for Québec. The traffic in both Montreal and Québec was atrocious. Jacques told us the reason was that all the street repairs had to be completed before the weather turned cold.

The next day we toured the Québec Old City. This was the most interesting part of Québec for many of us. The problem was the streets were very hilly and we old people were puffing when we returned to the bus. As people huffed their way up the steps of the bus, one of our group who suffered from emphysema, asked if anyone needed a puff of her inhaler. This brought a laugh to those who were so tired.

The following day we returned to Montreal. The event of the evening was a visit to the Montreal Casino. Each of us was given \$10.00 Canadian for gambling. I promptly lost mine but Sybil won back \$7.00. That made her the winner.



We left the next morning and arrived in Washington to tour the Vietnam Memorial, the Korean War Memorial and the World War II Memorial. For our last evening in Washington, we enjoyed "entertainment," a disc jockey who played music from CDs. His dry humor was such that we laughed, even as he insulted us. He insisted that we use the dance floor. He put one lady who had a birthday on a chair and we danced around her to tunes in Italian, Polish and Hebrew. Then he decided we had to perform a Line Dance and proceeded to teach us. I am certainly no dancer but I joined the fun. I even shuffled my feet to a slow dance with Sybil near the end of the evening.

The next day we left Washington at rush hour and arrived back in Elizabeth City at the Senior Center at 11pm, tired but happy to have wonderful memories of our trip.