

WEBERS WANDERINGS

WEBER IS SILENT - YELLER ROARS

Most of you know that Lu and I are devoted members of the national Contemporary Historical Vehicle Assn. In 1985 some southland members of the CHVA instituted a so-called Western Regional Mini-tour for people who could not afford to travel across country to the annual National Tour. The Mini-tour, like a National, is a 7 day driving tour, only it is always held on the west coast.

Lu and I are the only CHVA members to have participated in all previous 19 Mini-tours, all but two in an Edsel. We have even organized and led three previous tours ourselves, and were on the committee for a fourth. We love the driving to unusual or special places and the great people in the hobby. When there was a lapse in the "annuals" after XIX, we felt we had to have at least one more to make an even XX.

We started planning in June '06 after another great visit to an annual Edsel Club meet in Lindsay and a visit to Tom Meleo's fantastic Chevy collection.

Most of you probably have also heard about the little clinker that was dropped into our plans just a couple of months ago. I had surgery on March 27 to remove my voice box. Not exactly minor, but my doctors say I have been making an outstanding recovery. On the other hand, from my standpoint, it seems like recovery is moving at a snail's pace.

It sure has made for a major life change. Besides not having a voice, I now breathe thru a hole in my throat - technically a laryngostoma, more commonly called a "trache". You see the "heroes" perform tracheostomies to save lives on TV dramas all the time with a handy jack knife or sharp pen. Trust me, it ain't that easy!

Because the airway is now separated from the swaller pipe, I can't blow on my soup to cool it. With no airflow through my nose, I can't smell it! I can't swim because I can't hold my breath. I've just learned a new way to suck on a straw! I recently got an electronic voice machine, but have been having a slow time mastering it. It takes some learnin'.

So, if when I see you, I make occasional disgusting noises through my new throat hole, please forgive me - I have no control much of the time. You blow your nose - I blow my stoma. I may also make sudden disappearances from the scene into a rest room. I'm not being anti-social - just some things have to be taken care of. With the help of my nurse Lu I'm learning to cope with it.

So anyway, even though I was only out of the hospital about five weeks, there was nothing in the world that was going to stop me from putting on Mini-tour XX in an Edsel as advertised. I thought I was pretty well prepared, at least.

Well, maybe one small thing. A couple days before the tour, I wasn't feeling too athletic, so I drove Yeller to the local "deluxe hand car wash" to make it look decent. After the vacuuming, the non-English speaking attendant went to move the Pacer to the wash area. How to put it in gear? Showed him Tele-touch push-button shift in the steering wheel. Wow! He must have pushed all the buttons at once! Confused the poor Tele-touch, and it locked up in "low". Had to jump start it to move to the wash area, and again to drive it home - in "low"! Pooh! Just what I didn't need two days before the tour.

Got out all my Tele-touch fix-it material, messed with it, and, low and behold, she started working again. No idea what I did, but it kept going all tour!

So Saturday morning, May 5, off we went north to Visalia, in the company of our good CHVA buddy Joe Jones in his 1955 Oldsmobile. We knew we would be in good hands with master mechanic Joe, who had been a tremendous help with his enthusiasm and computer skills in the preparation for the tour. Joe even brought his power polishing equipment over to the house to improve the shine on Yeller.

MINI-TOUR XX

SATURDAY, MAY 5: We kicked off the tour with a welcoming party at 5 PM at the lovely LampLiter Inn in Visalia. We had tried to figure out a theme for this, the 20th Western Regional Mini-tour. Somehow Mini-tour XX just screamed "Dos Equis"!

(read that on a beer can somewhere), and since it was Cinco de Mayo, May 5th, you can guess the rest.

Our party was hostessed (is that a word?) by VVV's own lovely ladies, Becky Harris and Carolyn Ollis, who put together a fantastic spread of Mexican goodies, supplemented by Margaritas and other beverages. In keeping with the vernacular, we'd have been in deep guacamole without their help. They came all the way up from the L.A. area just to help us. It was quite a party on a lovely afternoon and well into the evening. Tour books and goodie bags stuffed with Meguiar products were passed out to tourers. We had 34 people in 17 cars join us for the tour.

SUNDAY, MAY 6: So how does a mute lead a 7 day tour? He gets a lot of good help from his CHVA family! Immediate past CHVA President Randy Huebner and Ellen would be asst. tour leaders in their '72 Chevelle, and follow right behind Webers' "Yeller" Edsel while reading from the detailed tour route book and passing instructions over the CB radio. Tail-gunner would be Joe Jones in his '55 Rocket. "Mustang Sally" Joyce Flanagan, who has been a real morale builder during "the trying times" volunteered to do the write up for the "AEV" magazine.

It didn't hurt that almost all of the other tourers were old friends from our CHVA family. The only first time tourers were Mt. Shasta Reg. Director Joe Kelman and sweet wife Cindy, and by the end of the tour they fit right into the "family".

After the drivers' meeting we left the motel for a short drive to Porterville to visit Tom Meleo and his amazing collection of Chevies. About one of each year from 1914 (serial #179) thru 1954. Every one about perfect or original, including an early 1917 V-8. Not even a speck of dust on this large collection! Lots of artifacts, too. Out in front of the building housing this collection is a replica of the Hancock gas station Tom's dad owned in the L.A. area in the '30s and '40s. Tom built this replica because he had an old gas pump to show off! Besides all this neat stuff, Tom is a really nice guy.

On to lunch at nearby El Nuevo Restaurant, then we took a short drive to Tulare for a visit to the Tulare Historical Museum. There was free time afterward and then the return to LampLiter for our second night and more partying.

MONDAY, MAY 7: Before the drivers' meeting in the parking lot, a bus load of French tourists were admiring our impromptu car show. When I popped the Edsel hood to check the fluids I was surrounded by the men oohing at the "big V-8".

We checked out of LampLiter and drove back thru Porterville to visit Doug Peltzer and his personal little collection of about 100 old tractors and farm implements dating back to 1918. It will soon get a little older, because out in front of the garage is his latest project - a huge 1917 Cole. Doug uses his Model A pickup as a work truck, but also has a 1913 Buick with only 3800 miles. He's a really nice guy, too.

We lunched at a nearby Denny's and Burger King, then drove on thru Bakersfield to Tehachapi. We cruised by the famed Tehachapi Loop where the front of a train can pass its rear, and stopped for a bit in the limited parking area, but no train came by to entertain us. It was a fun and twisting road, though. Overnight at a fine Travel Lodge and dinner on our own at some of the fine restaurants in town.

TUESDAY, MAY 8: Before the drivers' meeting Backdoor Joe Jones wondered why the Olds wouldn't start. Opened hood. ALL of the wiring harness had been cooked! Probably a bad voltage regulator. Now, Joe doesn't give up easily. He and the Olds rode a truck back to Tujunga, north of Los Angeles. He put the Olds away, transferred his belongings into his '63 Nova SS convertible, and drove back to rejoin the tour at the motel in Mojave!

We checked out and left about 9:00 for a short drive thru town and a tour of the Indian Point Ostrich Ranch, where we learned many interesting facts about these largest birds in the world. Also possibly the dumbest! There are many reasons they are almost the ideal critter to raise for a rancher, though. We followed the informative talk by an early ostrich bar-b-q lunch. Ostriches are not really nice guys, but they taste good.

After lunch, we drove back thru Tehachapi to visit Vintage V-12s, a shop that re-builds rare V-12 airplane engines, like Rolls Royce and Allison. Then some back

roads past some of the area's huge windmill farms to visit the Exotic Feline Breeding Compound. These are big cats, not pussy cats, but they are still cats, so we couldn't predict what they might be doing.

We wrapped up the day at the nice Best Western Motel in Mojave, with dinner on our own. Not a lot of excitement in Mojave!

WEDNESDAY, MAY 9: We checked out and left the Best Western at 8:15 for a 9AM-3PM tour of the Edwards Air Force Base Flight Test Center and NASA's facilities there, including lunch on base. With today's increased security, not just something everyone can do. Our guide for the Air Force portion of the tour, Dennis Shoffner, was a real card, and kept us entertained the whole time we were with him. The NASA lady guide got us inside some of the hangars for an up-close look at some impressive flying stuff.

From Edwards we took the little used (any more) Old Sierra Hwy. to the very out-of-the-way custom shop of famed rod builder Gene Winfield. We found this place purely by accident when scouting the tour, and it was quite a hit. Gene is now 80 years young, and quite a dynamic person. He took quite a bit of time to give us a personal tour of his shops. His specialty is still customizing early '50s Mercs and Lincolns, and he has quite a number of "lead sleds" in various stages of progress. He is also building a steel '32 Ford roadster to make a run for the class record at Bonneville this year!

We enjoyed Winfield so much we ran out of time and had to pass on the planned visit to the 20 Mule Team Borax pits and museum and went straight in to overnight in Barstow at the nice Comfort Inn.

THURSDAY, MAY 10: We checked out and left at 9AM for a short drive to a tour of the restored 1911 "Casa del Desierto" Harvey House hotel and restaurant, once a major stop on the railroad and now a National Historical Site. Also on the site are the Railroad and Rte 66 Museums, which we visited.

Afterward, we stopped for lunch on the way out of town at Peggy Sue's '50s restaurant. Then more boring desert (ooh! See the world's tallest thermometer in Baker, which was reading over 100!). After a rest stop in Baker, the big grade caused Yeller to start to vapor lock, and the rest stop at Halloran Springs was closed! We limped over the top, and she was good on the flat again, all the way to our Vegas headquarters. Glad we rescheduled the tour from the heat of September.

As we went to check into Sam's Town Hotel & Gambling Hall on the outskirts of the big city, Yeller's fuel pump gave up totally! Right in front! Security pushed us into a handicapped parking spot that was open by the main entrance. Joe Kelman loaned us his handicapped plaque. Foo! Great discouragement after coming so far so successfully.

FRIDAY, MAY 11: Led by Huebners, the tour left Sam's at about 9:30 to visit Sunbelt Classics fantastic collection of about 100 convertibles - mostly '30s to some '70s. It's a "wow!" Sunbelt had also just opened its second building full of non-rag-tops! After this magnificent private collection, a few folks went on to tour the Ethel M Chocolate Factory and ecological cactus garden (and partook of a few sweet samples)

In the meantime, Joe Jones found a replacement fuel pump at a nearby NAPA store, and with help from Randy Huebner and supervision from some of our CHVA friends, spent a sweaty few hours in the blazing Vegas sun changing it out for the "poor recuperating patient". (I liked that part - it was hot).

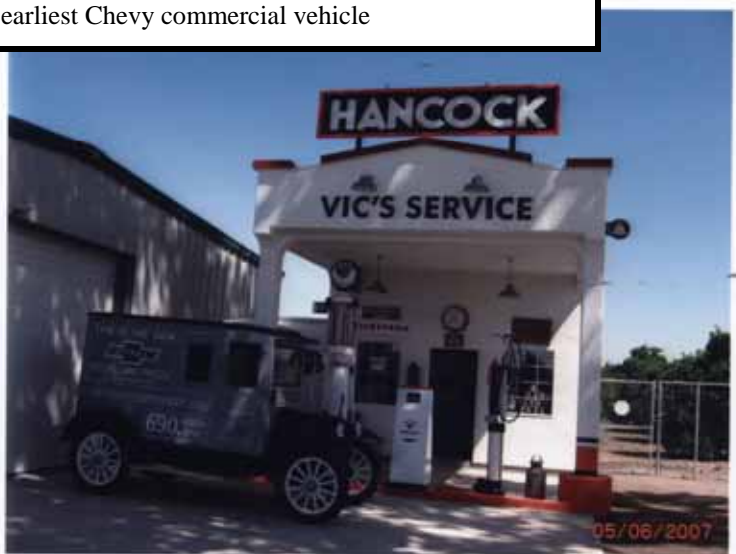
The tourers had free time after Sunbelt and Ethel M to return to Sam's, go downtown, or whatever before the finale banquet. Attitude adjustment was followed by, what else? A feast of Mexican food and a great party! A great end to the tour.

SATURDAY, MAY 12: It was farewell time. Yeller ran, and we headed back home. Still some vapor locking on the backside of Baker Grade, but OK on the flat. We stopped over in Barstool and had a lovely afternoon and evening with our eldest daughter, who was going to move to Whittier the next day.

SUNDAY, MAY 13: A short drive home in the cool of the morning. No vapor locks, no more problems. Finished up with 1020 more miles on Yeller.

Gary is still learning to "talk". It takes time, but its getting better!

Tom Meleo's replica of his Dad's gas station, with earliest Chevy commercial vehicle



Webers Wanderings

**WEBER IS SILENT—
YELLER ROARS**



Tom Meleo's 1914 Chevy #179



Just 2 of Tom Meleo's magnificent Chevys

You might be stupid, but you taste good.

