

DEJA VU

By Jim Lucas AKA Chief Rightwing

In the words of Yogi Bera it was "DEJA VU all over again" for some of us on this trip! Our group of CHVA members were making a cross country trek to North Carolina. Ten years before this a dozen of us had taken a similar trip from California to Tennessee. Now, five of that dozen were on this trip. At the time of that first trip, Ida and I lived in California, but now were retired and living in Grand Junction, Colorado.

Bob and Ruth Trueax planned and led this trip, as they had done the other one. This time we didn't need to join the group along the way because it was scheduled to meet us for breakfast in our adopted town.. We would be the fourth car in the group, but others would join at different places. Bob and Ruth (along with their daughter and her two children) were driving a 1951 De Soto station wagon and Don Howell was driving a 1964 Buick convertible. Ida and I were in our 1941 Olds, which was the same one we used on the earlier trip. Because they were going to take an extended vacation after the tour was over, Bill and Joyce Dibble were in a modern car, On the trek a decade earlier we had driven diagonally through the states of Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas to Tennessee. This trip would lead us through Colorado, Kansas, southeast through Missouri, a corner of Illinois and Kentucky to North Carolina.

Don needed an alternator for his car, so I led the group to a parts store that stocked a large inventory of vintage car parts. While Don fixed his car the rest of us took a walking tour of our town. Once we were ready to leave, Bob called us on the CB to ask how to get out of town. Ida (she operates the CB while I drive) told him to go to the end of the block, turn left and turn right on I-70. Except for Denver, it is about that easy to get out of town anywhere in Colorado. Once we were underway Ida pointed out points of interest as we passed by them. She said that there was a nice back road which paralleled the interstate for several miles. Bob decided to use it. It's a pleasant drive, just out of sight of I-70, passing through a couple of "Blink of the eye towns. All went well until we came to a dead end. As often happens with us we had forgotten where to get back to the interstate! After executing a "Keystone Kopp" type turn around and backtracking a couple of miles we bungled our way back onto I-70.

Our first overnight stop was in Idaho springs, Co, where another car joined us. The newcomers were Russ (CB, Gambler) and his brother-in-law Al Chamberlain. It was a surprise to see him driving a 1956 T-Bird. We have made many tours with Russ and he always drove a red 1958 Buick LTD convertible. It had been about 90 degrees on the trip, but after sundown it turned into a lovely cool evening, giving us hope that the next day would bring nice weather. Not a chance, the next day the temperature topped at 103, and it only cooled to about 90 by evening!

When we headed for Denver we were five cars in number but were expecting to be joined by Harry and Sandy Ozols (The Wizard of Oz) as we passed through Denver. The agreement was that if they were not at the rendezvous spot we were to continue going and they would catch up with us. About the time we reached Denver our White mans talking

box (called CB) began to fade in and out. Fortunately it worked well enough that Bob could get us through the city without getting lost. Later it completely quit working, causing me to resort to smoke signals and burn holes in my blanket.

The day got hotter as we went along, and the Olds became more difficult to start every time we stopped. When we stopped for breaks and lunch we parked so that the Wizard could see us when he caught up with us. Just as we were getting ready to start after a rest stop, Ida announced that Harry and Sandy just went past. Now everyone knows that she can't tell the difference between a Packard and a Model T, so we all had a good laugh and got under way. The laugh was on us when we caught up with the Wizard, who indeed had passed and pulled off of the road until we got there!

When we arrived at the motel, Ida told me to get the CB fixed. The problem was that the 12 volt battery I used to run the CB needed a charge. Our group now numbered 14 people. We all sat together for a good meal and a great time visiting. Harry o. had a guide book for "good eating" and often used it to find great eating places as we went along. The next day would be an eventful day taking us from Smith Center, Kansas to Clinton, Missouri.

This day it was about 20 degrees cooler than it had been, and except for rain from time to time, the rest of the way the weather was quite pleasant. In the town of Cawker City, Ka., which boasts that its claim to fame is that it has the largest ball of twine in the world, we stopped and took pictures, just in case it was true. About mid-morning we stopped at an ice cream shop. While we talking a this break, we were joined by Edna "Wheels" Jewett, thus adding another car to our little Gypsy band. Around noon we took a two hour (pre arranged) lunch meeting with CHVA, Sunflower Region members, John and Mary Jean Flory.

After lunch they trailed along with us for a while, before going to their home, while we continued our trip toward Clinton. Later, that afternoon, we were driving on a two lane country road, which was full of sharp curves and led up and down one hill after another. We were the last car in line right behind "Wheels." We came upon a flat stretch of road., and a big rig was coming from the other direction. Right before our eyes Edna leaned over with her head out of sight. As she did this her car weaved over the white line. Before Ida could call on the CB, the truck was upon us. The driver gave a blast on his air horn, pulled onto the shoulder and roared past us. Thinking that Edna must be terrified, Ida gave her a call on the CB. Edna was unaware of what had taken place, because she had leaned down to pick up her portable CB unit which had fallen off of the seat, while going around the a curve!

At the motel we met two more CHVA members, Ray and Judy Stone. They were there scouting the area a future CHVA tour which would be hosted by the Sunflower Region and would be held in the Kansas/Missouri area. At about 6 the next morning, when I took the bags to the car, I discovered that it was still dark and was raining very hard. Then I discovered that I had left the hood vent open and the car was full of water! By the time the group finished breakfast and assembled to for departure, the rain had stopped.

We had a pleasant drive through the lovely Missouri countryside. Another pleasant thing was taking place.; the price of gas was slowly but surely dropping. When the group left California, gas was about \$1.50 per gallon and about \$1.30 when we left Colorado. It was \$1.09 when I filled the tank and later I saw a station where it was .99 cents! Our destination for the night was Cairo, Illinois. We took a side trip through Cape Girardeau, to visit a place of interest.

To me, Cairo seemed like a grubby little town one might find along the Mexican border, and the price of gas was over \$1.30. Rather than drive into town, we all decided to eat at the restaurant in the truck service area adjacent to the hotel. The place was not listed in the book of fine dining that Harry O. was using to help us pick good restaurants to eat in, but the food and service would qualify. Although the area looked unsavory, the rooms were fine and our cars were still there in the morning and unmolested.

From the day I first acquired the Olds I accumulated as many spare parts as I find. This proved to be a wise policy because we have driven it tens of thousands of miles and replaced every imaginable part, including wheel bearings, speedometer cable and manifold. Some things have been rebuilt and replaced more than once. Much of these repair jobs occurred while we were on trips, so during the years I have acquired a faithful group of hecklers who use every opportunity to have fun at my expense. On this trip things were going so well that I would find out of the way places where no one could see me, just to check the oil. My plan was to keep anyone from seeing the olds with the hood open. It was a nerve wracking game that I would eventually lose.

Even while traveling in a group Ida and I managed to get lost. This of course wasn't the only time that it happened. We actually managed to do it [**twice**] while we were leading a National Tour, which we had planned. On this day, as we were leaving town, after breakfast, I turned the wrong way, and Ida didn't notice it. We soon noticed that we were not only out of sight of the others but also out of CB range. We backtracked to the restaurant and started over again. By the time the others realized we were not with them and Bob T. came looking for us, we had recovered and were well on the way to catching up with the group. We had to take a little good natured ribbing until noon.

After lunch the Gambler (whose T-Bird was overheating) decided to stay behind and have the radiator flushed and catch up with us later. As it turned out, it took two days for him to catch us. The way he explained it, he and Al had also taken a wrong turn and had gone 200 miles in the wrong direction and were about 350 miles behind us by the time they got back on the right track! That night Iron Doc and his family were the only ones who were able to get a room in the first choice motel, The rest of us (except the Dibbles, who had to go to the next town) all stayed at the backup motel. The next day when we compared notes we found that Bob had to pay twice the price quoted him, Bill had to pay \$75.00 for his room, we and the Ozols paid \$45.00 for our rooms and Ida found \$25.00 in the parking lot while we were taking our morning walk!

The last leg of our trip would be only about 200 miles and looked like it would be a

cinch. We expected to be in Asheville, North Carolina around eleven AM. We were moving along at a good rate when suddenly we overtook an endless line of traffic. The weather was hot and the cars were even hotter, as we crept along at a stop and go pace. A couple of police cars passed us and we thought that there must be an accident ahead. Finally we reached the crest of a hill after a long steep climb., and we could see for miles. There was a long line of cars coming toward us. They were all turning right on a crossroad, The long line of traffic we were following was turning left on the same road. At the intersection our group was able to move to the right and race unmolested on our merry way!

It was around 1;30 PM when we finally reached town and learned that all of the cars were going to some type of an outdoor country jamboree. We had a great lunch at a nice Greek restaurant before driving another 30 miles to join the National Tour. The reason I end my stories at the National Tours is that many people know about them, but few people know of the trips to get there.

By the end of the tour, after more than two weeks of constant companionship, we had a farewell breakfast with a few good friends, and Ida and I started the long trip home, alone. We were in no hurry and took ten days wandering home.