

**IN SEARCH OF THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH
CHVA NATIONAL TOUR
MAY 12-22, 2011**

by Lynn Carter

We left Kissimmee, FL, met Charlie and Sue Fitzgibbons and headed towards Suwannee, FL, and, yes, this is the correct spelling except for the song in which the spelling is different for lyrical purposes. Although we have lived in Central Florida for almost 20 years there were several sites on this tour we have never visited. We were looking forward to the journey! As we arrived at our destination we wondered if Dolly was trying to send the CHVAers a message when she chose "Convict Springs" as our first resting place. Since the Klaas' and the Carters were housed closest to the "lynchin tree" we slept lightly this first night.

Dolly and Harry arrived early and set up a delicious hors d'oeuvre buffet for us on Thursday. After some getting-to-know-you chatter we picked up our huge goodie bags and pillows and returned to our rooms.

The Suwannee River Rendezvous Resort and Campground was at one time a Florida prison. (1) According to resort literature the prison was closed after many complaints of prisoner abuse . This rustic resort was dotted with cabins among the trees. Behind the restaurant and game room was a natural spring which housed a cave. Many national and international divers come here to dive into the cave. Although the cave was not visible there was a rock shelf that could be seen. As three of us viewed the rock out- cropping Ruth Trueax, Charlotte Klaas and I decided not to partake of this unique diving experience. Another unique experience at this time of the year was tour participants being introduced to the Florida love bugs.

Dinner was at 6:00PM in Mayo, FL, at Boon Docks restaurant. Although the cook was not ready for an onslot of 15 people, the servers were very friendly and made sure we have plenty of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. Dolly passed blue crab claws for everyone to taste. They were delicious. In the relaxed knotty-pine atmosphere Larry and I sat with the Williams and

learned of Robert's orchards and antique auto collection, and Margie's love and skill at finding civil war era folks and family members from their county in Kentucky.

The next morning the group ate Grandma Susie's eggs and pancakes either outside at picnic tables or in the recreation room. The resort is a quaint place to enjoy the peacefulness of the Suwannee River. (2)

We said farewell and took SR 51 through the beautiful Florida landscape. (3) BK mentioned driving from Live Oak, CA, to Live Oak, FL, as we passed through one of many small towns. The colonial Suwannee County Court House, farms and ranches were part of the countryside.

Our first stop was at the Stephen Foster Memorial situated on a lush green lawn with stately Magnolia trees(4). The docent gave us many interesting facts as we sat in a period-decorated room. One of the several antique pianos was a Steinway Concert Grand with a rare von Janko' keyboard. According to a handout and Winifred Bush Hill the piano belonged to Franklin Coleman Bush, her father, who was a pioneer Floridian from 1896 to 1940. Mr. Bush started the first school of music in Miami. Without going into too much explanation Mrs. Hill described the keyboard as a rival to the standard keyboard with the "appearance of six different rows of keys arranged stepwise." (5) Mrs. Hill further stated, "Von Janko's object therefore was to simplify piano technique", but this invention did not catch on. Our docent mentioned this design would have been very helpful for pianists with small hands.

I think the dioramas captured most of our attention. Based on Foster's songs these works of art and skill had many unique moving parts. There are 10 dioramas. The literature states it took 14 artists 2 years to design and finish the first 8 dioramas with approximately 1500 manhours each. Research was needed to find appropriate raw materials as each piece was made by hand. This is an outstanding exhibit of imagination and craftsmanship. In another building CHVAers learned of the Bell Tower chimes intricacy. The hourly chimes were impressive.

We had a short respite from the sun while sitting on rockers on

Cousin Milly's gift shop porch. Other shops to visit included: basketmaking, crocheting, knitting and jewelry making.

Once back in our autos we passed many wild flowers of pink, purple, white and yellow along the roadway. Ichetucknee State Park was the next stop. We traversed a nature walk to a natural spring which drew many folks who were enjoying kayaks and tubes floating along the river. What a great jaunt for family fun. Nestled in the north end of the park is another natural Spring called "Blue Hole". Park literature states the Blue Hole boasts an "average temperature of 72 degrees, average discharge of 67 million gallons of water per day and an aquatic cave length of 580 feet." (6) Drivers are drawn to this area. We did see the rock formations but not inside the cave. However, in the parking lot what we did see and learn was how many CHVAers it takes to flatten a cardboard box! The answer is 3 CHVAers under the direction of the president.

On the road again using Rte 16 East we passed the Clay County Court House with a cabosse out in the front, more countryside and eventually crossed the St. John's River impressive with its width at this point. St. Augustine was our destination. (7)

The Alhambra Inn was our resting place for Friday night. (8) Pre-dinner hors d'oeuvres were passed around in "deluxe" plastic bags in Dolly and Harry's suite! I think the group finished everything we could eat with our fingers. Dinner was on our own and then the Carters put their feet up for the evening.

Saturday, young at heart CHVAers continued with their search for the fountain of youth in St. Augustine. We had a delightful, narrated carriage ride through the old city passing by Spanish Moss and colonial homes of various colors and architecture. (9-10) Of course many buildings are named after Henry Flagler who spent much money building the railroad in this first city of America. (11-12-13) Some of our folks toured the Castillo de San Marcos and listened to the cannon fire while waiting for their narrated carriage ride. A Spanish festival was going on while we were in St. Augustine. Many participants were dressed in early Spanish costumes and set up tents and campfires throughout the city. (14) Dolly and Cindy and Joe stand beside the wonderful historic Spanish characters in the Visitors Center. (15-16) This was a delightful visit and many of us

will return to St. Augustine for a longer visit.

Leaving the city behind we meandered south along A1A passing beaches and many beautiful coastal homes. Pink, purple and white Bougainville bushes lined some of the roadway. At Ormond Beach we traveled through the canopy lined streets of Highbridge Park and environs. Such a lovely area with gorgeous water front properties. We then directed our sights for Daytona.

Racing began in the early 1900's on Daytona Beach. As we turned from the highway and onto the beach we passed under the familiar Daytona Beach Arch (17). We proceeded with our leisurely drive along the beach merging into already moving traffic. Such a thrill to be driving on Daytona Beach! It must have been a graduation week as there were many young adults watching our cars. We looked "great" as our cars paraded by the rolling surf. (18-19) As the wind came up the cars had to leave the beach for a block and then returned to the beach. Our rendezvous was interrupted as a weather front quickly and ominously descended upon us. The sand was in gusts and white caps were seen on the ocean. Bathers heedless of the moving traffic ran to their beach-parked cars for shelter. A sturdy beach umbrella went airborne and hit the Fitzgibbons convertible top and punctured a hole through it. Fortunately for Charlie and Sue the top was up on their Oldsmobile protecting them from the umbrella onslot. As the wind and dark clouds escalated it became chaotic on the beach. Folks recklessly backed their vehicles into oncoming traffic. The Trueax's were almost hit by one of these idiots! Sadly our beach tour was cut short as we headed for Melissa's carwash for full-body and under-carriage washes, although, we were never completely sand-free. The rain pelted the cars as we returned to the Ramada Inn. Great time for an afternoon rest before dinner.

The UNO PIZZERA is connected with the hotel. After dinner we headed for the CHVA meeting. B.K. Showalter opened this non-official meeting with a cordial welcome. All of us joined B.K. in a round of applause for Dolly and Harry for this great tour. Introducing Bob Higday as CHVA Secretary B.K. described Bob as a "great guy". B.K. mentioned CHVA members needed to find a candidate for president as he wishes to devote more time to writing. Many of us are enjoying his first book, "CA\$H SCOW", which was

recently published. Then Dick Klaas distributed a handout introducing the "2012 CHVA Plantations, Pines and Prairies" National Tour in Texas from September 30 to October 7, 2012. Enthusiastic discussion ensued. More information will be forthcoming.

After the meeting was finished CHVAers had the privilege of meeting Bob Coolidge and listening to his presentation of "Racing On The Beach". His wealth of knowledge and story-telling ability fascinated his audience. Originally the cars raced on the highway to the south pole in Daytona, and then went onto the beach and back up to the north pole. With a top speed of 53 mph in the first race, documented speeds rose to 276 mph although an undocumented 300 mph was reached towards the end of this racing phase. Finishing his talk Bob said he would join us again at the Living Legends of Auto Racing Museum.

On this beautiful Sunday morning making your own pancakes on the beach at De Leon State Park was our goal. However, many other families had the same idea and there was quite a long wait for the breakfast. The Old Spanish Sugar Mill at the park ground the flour used to make the pancakes. (20) Several of us chose the other option of a 60 minute narrated boat ride on the St. John's River. (21-22) Capt. Frank and Ruth gave us the history of the river as well as guiding us to varied wildlife along the banks including alligators, osprey, egrets, blue heron and numerous smaller birds to name just a few. Interestingly the river flows south to north emptying into the Atlantic Ocean at Jacksonville, FL. We were able to touch an alligator and alligator eggs during the trip.

The Living Legends of Auto Racing Museum was the next stop and we were greeted by Bob Coolidge, and a surprise visit from Ray Fox (23). Ray is in his nineties and came especially to meet and greet the CHVAers. This gentleman was instrumental in making racing what it is today. His personal memorabilia, trophies and newspaper articles lined the walls of the museum. Ray was happy to see each of us and share a tidbit about his racing days. In the foyer of the museum we reminisced by watching black and white videos of past races. One authentic race car and several replicas were eye catching as we passed them parked in front of the museum.

After a pit stop at the Ramada we drove across the street to the Daytona International Speedway. The Speedway is an interesting place for more than the racing enthusiast. A sculpture of Bill and Ann France graces the front entrance. Inside the main lobby Judy and Terry Borgmann wait for our tour to begin and sit among all of the racing memorabilia. (24-25) A jitney with a clear and informative narrator took us around the grounds. We moved around the track learning of the recent improvements. The track looked brand new as we walked up an 18 degree slope towards the wall some drivers get to know only too well. (26-27) The corners are even steeper. Caution, Stop and Go lights as well as the spotter boxes were viewed. Back in the jitney we learned interesting facts regarding Pit Row as we passed by. The stage for photos was next on the list of stops. A CHVA group picture was taken by the professional photographer. (28) She kindly and tirelessly took all of our cameras to take our photos. Special pricing for our group was incentive to purchase the professional photos. Some walked up and others rode up to the Press Boxes our next stop. We could see the entire track as we learned more information. Joe Kelman looks like he belongs here. (29) After we came down stairs we walked through the Budweiser Cafe, and viewed billboards with information regarding the more well-known drivers. The Drivers Meeting Room gave us an idea of where announcements and critical issues were discussed. From there our ride took us past an obstacle course, the medical facilities, areas for RVs and the tunnel to the infield. We ended the tour by passing through the gift shop. Sunday evening we met in the restaurant for a drink, some salsa and lots of fun chatter.

Monday morning we had a late driver's meeting so we could watch the final ENDEAVOR Shuttle launch. The rocket and fire power were visible. I believe this was a special experience for all of us.

Back on the Dixie Highway we were ready for another bright sunny day of touring. We passed more small towns along the beach. Turning off A1A the tour followed the road in the Merritt Island Wildlife Refuge stopping at the Haulover Canal. We watched as a couple of Manatees were playing in the narrow channel. The boardwalk had displays with interesting facts regarding the Manatees. (30-31) Beside us the drawbridge was elevated and some sailboats and other motorboats drove through. As the Florida

love bugs increased we returned to our cars and continued through the Wildlife Refuge on the way to Catfish Cabin Restaurant in Titusville. At this rustic local restaurant we enjoyed grouper, catfish and homemade chips.

Close by was the The American Police Hall Of Fame and Museum. (32-33) This impressive structure is dedicated to our local and state heroes, the police officers, who keep us safe at the risk of their own lives. On May 13th this organization celebrated their 50th anniversary so the museum was filled with multiple bouquets of fresh flowers donated by family and friends honoring the fallen men and women. Short narratives with some photos gave a solemn remembrance of the many officers honored here. There is a casket draped with an American flag representing all of the police officers. Of course there are vehicles, many tools of the trade, and newspaper stories of police events taking place throughout the state of Florida. A special corner describes a K-9 Officer, and there is an interesting Crime Scene display to test your detective skills.

Back in our cars we drove south on the Cape Canaveral Parkway passing a docked cruise ship at Port Canaveral and Cocoa Beach with its beautiful and straight Norfolk Island Pine trees. Also Cocoa is the home of the Ron Jon Surf Shop with its Art Deco Home store. Next was Patrick Air Force Base, Home of the 45th Space Wing, Satellite Beach and Indian Beach with little beachside picnic areas and the Sebastian Inlet State Park. Part of this area is protected for turtle nesting grounds. Many of the homes along the way to Vero Beach had decorative mailboxes with Manatees, Pelicans, boats, etc. Closer to Vero we passed the Windsor where Prince Charles played Polo a time or two. The City of Vero Beach is picturesque with palm trees of assorted varieties and many colorful Bougainville bushes. The Surfside Motel would be our home for two nights. Located not far from the motel some of us had the hearty breakfast special for \$2.99 at Mulligan's On The Beach the next two mornings. Monday evening Dolly and Harry took some of the more hearty members of our group to the Renegade Cruiser Car Rally just a few minutes away from the motel. A good time was had by all.

Tuesday's early risers took the first airboat ride located in Fellsmere. This was one of the highlights of the tour. Originally a family-owned ranch with its own racetrack this property now has a

dam allowing for a manmade lake with smaller finger-like aqua projections. As we sped through narrow channels of water between aisles of high grass and foliage we saw lounging alligators and many birds. (34-35-36) Some birds were drying their wings before flight and many others were nesting in trees. The wildlife was abundant. Returning to dock the Florida love bugs were all around us.

As the second group took their ride we followed the blue Mustang to the National Navy UDT (Underwater Demolition Team)-SEAL Museum in Fort Pierce. (37-38) We arrived at the picnic area next to the museum just as the caterer did. He invited the group to taste our lunch of "turtles"! A little skeptical but hungry we went to the buffet containers and realized our box lunch was actually hot dogs and hamburgers made to look like turtles (39). A tomatoe, bean and asparagus salad with an apple and gourmet cookies completed our luncheon plate. Unfortunately the Florida love bugs again followed us and cut short our noontime meal. The outside area surrounding the museum had a Wall of Honor, various water-landing craft, the actual Maersk Life Boat with its bullet holes and 2 unique metal sculptures of Frogman/ SEALs in action poses. (40)) The Navy SEALs assisted in the rescue of Captain Richard Phillips who has held hostage by Somali pirates for five days in 2009. The walkway includes bricks donated by many friends and families of this unusual group of Navy Special Warfare warriors. Inside the museum I found the videos of SEALs' training, actual missions, and the memorabilia very interesting and informative. There is a wall dedicated to the seven SEALs who have received the Medal of Honor. The museum describes the wars, military engagements, etc. starting with WW I to recent times with associated memorabilia and dioramas.

Our next stop was The McClarty Treasure Museum. Brochure description states the museum is "located on a National Historic Landmark site of the 1715 Spanish Plate Fleet Survivors and Salvaging Camp". From the ship wreck, among the artifacts found in the early 1940's are Spanish colonial items. A hurricane in the mid-1950's unearthed an extensive archeological find, and in the 1960's more gold and silver, jewelry, porcelains and everyday living items were discovered. Many of these objects are on display. According to our informative guide an emerald of more than 40

carats was found on the beach by a tourist a few years ago.

Tuesday evening's dinner was catered on the rooftop terrace of the motel. Since everyone brought their copy of B.K.'s book hoping for an autograph he graciously signed the books with a personal note. (41-42) An appetizer of fresh shrimp was served, and then succulent filet accompanied by 3 delicious salads composed our menu. Gourmet brownies and cookies followed. Charlotte, how is your supply of lemon cookies? Unfortunately the love bugs joined us. Rosemarie and I made sure our glass tops were covered after a couple of the little guys took a sip. (43) Never daunted Dolly thanked everyone for their participation in the tour and distributed the CHVA Tour plaques. Dolly mentioned that the bottom of the plaque is reserved for your favorite tour photo. (44-51) As the evening was coming to a close a suggestion was made that each of us tell a little something about ourselves. During the next hour snippets of family life were shared. Robert Williams regaled us with the description of being stuck in his car while in his car trailer.

Wednesday, the Carters and the Fitzgibbons had to leave the tour. Judy Borgmann will describe Wednesday's tour, Margie Williams will write about Thursday's events and Terry Borgmann will give us a glimpse of Friday morning. Thanks to all who have graciously added their expertise to this article.

From Judy Borgmann: On Wednesday, May 18th, the tour left The cozy Sea Spray Gradens Inn in anticipation of more great experiences. We traveled 77 miles along scenic Florida highways to Frostproof where we were welcomed by Bob O'Hara to his restoration shop.

O'Hara's specializes in the restoration, maintenance and sales of antique autos. Services include paint and body work, interiors, rare part replacement or fabrication - everything from the chassis up. They also offer vintage car sales, auto consignments, hard-to-find parts, worldwide auto delivery services for any specialty automobile.

Many individuals enjoyed visiting Bob. He did put a smile on the Borgmann's faces when he replied to Dick Klaas that he did indeed have a can of R12 Freon and was gracious enough to have his employees charge the air conditioner in the Borgmann's '69 Cutlass.

After many fruitless stops searching for Freon, this kindness made the rest of the trip more enjoyable and will not be forgotten. Thanks to Dick for bringing up the topic.

The group also met and visited Earl Beauchamp at the restoration shop. Earl was the organizer of CHVA and has membership #1 in the organization. In addition he started publishing the AEV Magazine.

After being pulled away from the restoration shop, we enjoyed a great lunch of family style cooking at the Frostproof Family Restaurant. The restaurant had a wide selection of choices, including fried green tomatoes which several of us could not resist. Earl was overheard speaking to his wife on the phone, "They have had huge lunches so it may be awhile before they are ready for the desserts you have".

The women enjoyed a tour of the Beauchamp's home filled with Julia's doll collection, furniture from their early years of marriage and a lovely collection of photographs. The garage/display area was prepared for our arrival with chairs, hot coffee, iced drinks, cookies, cakes and snacks. Earl and Julia were very gracious hosts for the CHVA group. Many thanks to Earl and Julia for their hospitality.

Again on the road the group traveled to Bradenton to begin our four night stay at the Christian Retreat. Many of the group enjoyed conversation overlooking the lovely view of the hotel. We were delighted to have Judy Higday join us at this juncture of the tour.

From Margie Williams: On Thursday three of the older couples Williams, Trueax and Showalter followed Harry and Dolly north to Homosassa Springs Wildlife Park. The younger ones took a "down time" day.

We took a boat ride and viewed the feeding of the 3,500 lbs. Manatta and "Louie" the hippopotamus. He was born in the San Diego Zoo in 1952. When the park was taken over by the state in the late 1980's, they tried to move "Louie" because he was not a native animal, but the community had a protest, signed petitions and got the Government of Florida to register him as a citizen of Florida.

While viewing the feeding of "Louie" we heard a very strange sound that was similar to a motor cycle trying to start. The park ranger informed us that the mating season for the alligators was during May. We saw many other animals and birds. The group had lunch in the gift shop and returned to our cars on a tram. This was a very nice tour.

Friday morning we traveled to Tarpan Springs for a tour of Classic Corvettes where we saw a number of fully restored classic cars. On to Land O'Lakes, Fla., for the lunch stop at a Sonic Drive-in. The shot of all of the old cars lined up at the drive-in brought memories of days (or years) gone by.

Rejoining the tour on Friday we met at Fantasy of Flight in Polk City. This large museum is dedicated to flying machines and the military. When we arrived in the Compass Rose restaurant Judy Higday, her first day on tour, and others were enjoying some lunch. (52) Glad you are on tour Judy! Some of the CHVAers went through the museum which encompasses WW I to present day memorabilia. Then on to a jitney to view WW II planes and engines. A bi-plane landed as we were getting to ready to leave the museum. The tour group separated with the blue Mustang and the Higdays going towards Tampa for a cruise-in at Biff Burgers while others wished to return to the hotel. Following the Senator, CHVAers ate dinner and rode through another rural part of Florida. We passed several working phosphate mines. Large draglines are used in the strip mining process which is a sizeable industry in Florida. Phosphate is used in making fertilizer. Thanks Charlie! The sunset was beautiful along the way back to the Christian Retreat. I heard the Tampa cruise-in was fun, too.

Hard to believe the last day of the tour is here. Breakfast was in the Retreat Dining Room with lots more folks today. Gas tanks full we headed towards the Armed Forces Military Museum hidden in one of Florida's many strip malls.(53) The lobby is impressive with exceptionally tall manikins in dress uniforms from different military branches and periods.

The armament area was the next display. Our knowledgeable guide, a Viet Nam War Vet, described many of the weapons in great

detail. Further into this surprisingly large museum we passed through a WW I trench and a salute to WW II with the noise of bombing, gunfire and military chatter. Our guide pointed out one of the museum's treasured items the USS Missouri Inkwell used to sign the WW II Peace Treaty. (54) Turning a corner we found more memorabilia from many of the USA's military engagements, so many in fact that it is hard to describe. However, since Germany was a major player in WW II there is a display dedicated to German memorabilia which includes another museum treasure, an Iron Cross with a Knight Cross attached. (55) We were told this is an unusual piece. This is the first time I have seen such a display in a US Military museum but I did find it very interesting. The guide was quick to say that the museum was not honoring the Nazi regime. This museum is impressive and a great tribute to all of the USA military.

A few miles away lunch was at Quaker Steak and Lube a fun place(56). Phyllis Mathiot and two friends joined us for lunch. (57)Phyllis is a long time member of CHVA and head of the Florida Chapter. Two of Dolly's family members also joined us. Our table stretched almost to the end of one room. Transportation and sports memorabilia lined the walls and ceilings. Walking through the other rooms the mementos were endless and varied. Both foodies and auto enthusiasts had their appetites satiated.

The Tampa Auto Museum was next on our docket. Another very interesting display this time of foreign automobiles. The brochure states that most of the vintage autos are from the 1920's and 1930's including Tatras from the Czech Republic, a Peugeot Darl'Mat and Panhard Dynamic from France, a Ruxton and a Willys Knight from the USA, and an Alvis from England. (B.K. has a good story about Willys Knight) But what caught the eye is the world's only replica of the Le Fardier de Cugnot labeled as "the world's first self-propelled vehicle." Built in the 1770s it carried its own full size cannon underneath. A short video explained design and building of the unique contraption.

Back to the Christian Retreat we rested and changed clothes for our final dinner at the Sarasota Classic Car Museum. Yvonne greeted CHVA and gave us a warm welcome. After an open bar started the evening, B.K. offered a few congratulatory words to Dolly and Harry

for an interesting tour and a job well done. As the applause continued B. K. handed our leaders the usual thank you envelope. The catered dinner was served with Filet and Grouper as the main courses accompanied with salad, vegetable and potato. My most enjoyed item was the chocolate cake served for dessert! As we finished our meal the tour of the classic cars for sale began. So many beautiful cars so few hours to drive them! My favorite was the blue 1954 Buick Skylark convertible with a huge trunk for traveling but too much chrome to polish. Back at the hotel we bid each other a fond farwell. (58-72)

Life in Central Florida includes more than Mickey and I-Drive. Dolly intuitively chose the highlights and gave us a delightful tour. Again thank you very much, Dolly and Harry.