

A VENT WINDOW VIEW  
*Wandering Through Wonders*  
December 2015

The foremost reason for our membership in CHVA is the pleasure Marjorie and I derive from the club's National tours. Those annual "outings" not only lead participants to view sights never before visited, they bring us together with others traveling in cars of an age similar to those we drove before our kids were grown. In truth, back in those days, the "age" of our cars really did not matter because in those ancient "pre-radial" tires and "power everything" periods, few of us could accrue enough vacation time to drive a vehicle beyond its capabilities "distance-wise."

This meant that most of us in our younger days missed visiting sights such as the largest ball of twine in the world--or the rock that marks the geographic center of the United States--or those remarkable Pueblo Indian dwellings found in the southwestern states of our country.

Along with exploring the USA with other CHVA members from around the country, Marjorie and I have, over the years, managed to enjoy excursions on vintage machines such as "steam-powered" trains, WW II Army "ducks," and a Mississippi "side-wheeler." Yes, sometimes those aging transportation units fail; in one instance, a group of 30 plus members ended up discovering the joys of warmed-over food after returning some 2 or 3 hours late from their trip down the Snake River. Their motorized "barge" had suffered an engine failure quite some distance *downstream* from our hotel. And, yes, there have been other problems on these tours, but after the fact most of them became long remembered topics of conversation among participants on later outings!

During one recent tour we watched glassblowers shape glorious works of art and then, after returning to our cars, we traveled ten or fifteen miles east of that artistic community to a museum filled with historic aircraft. In that short time period we enjoyed examples of artistry in beauty *and* function. It is this overall variety of activities during our club outings that add so much spice to our tours. In Portland, OR, a few years back, our group paid a visit to a Japanese tea garden shortly after visiting a WW II submarine located in a science museum a few blocks away. The incongruity of those two stops still fills me with wonder when I consider the emotions evinced by the Pacific violence of WW II. On a "mini-tour" in that same area, we "did" the Columbia Gorge (with a "photo-op" stop at Multnomah Falls). After soaking up Mother Nature's bounty in the "Gorge", we traveled a few miles farther east and enjoyed a visit to the Maryhill Art Gallery located "upstream" on the north side of the river. The geographical differences between those two areas offer a real variety of western scenery!

In fact, geographic wonders often make up a large part of a CHVA national tour. One memorable example was the occasion when we explored Mesa Verde and, later, the red rock formations north of that area. Those of us who, in our long ago youth, adored Saturday afternoon "cowboy" westerns, got an up close and personal look at some of the scenery displayed in those "shoot'em-ups." As we toured the rocky terrain of Colorado and Utah I was frequently reminded of those "six gun sagas" that I enjoyed so much in the Forties. Few "real life" memories rival those Saturday screenings except for the occasion of my sixteenth birthday, a happening that allowed me to obtain a license to drive! That was a truly seminal occasion in my life, one that outranked many other major occasions such as marriages and children. (Let me point out that only one of the events mentioned in this paragraph *required any testing* to obtain a license, but after going through the process of learning to live with a wife and children it's clear to me that guys should have to pass a test before undertaking those responsibilities.)

It is not possible to mention all the fun things we have seen and enjoyed while touring with CHVA since our first outing on the 2001 Route 66 Tour. (We did not join that group until it reached Joplin, MO as I was leery about taking our "never been tested on the open road" 1959 Ford convertible into Chicago where Route 66 originated.) We've made every National Tour since in various Fords; including the aforementioned '59 ragtop, we've driven a '55 four door sedan and, most recently, a '67 Fairlane 2-door hardtop (which served up our first "tour" breakdown).