

A VENT WINDOW VIEW
AN ODYSSEY in PINK
SEPTEMBER 2015

Once I learned that CHVA's 2001 National Tour would cover Route 66 from Chicago to Santa Monica, my desire to drive that hallowed route refused to be quieted.

Like most members of CHVA, I knew that Route 66 had been utilized by the Okies in the Thirties and the American military during the Forties. By the early Fifties, with postwar autos increasingly able to haul a family halfway across the continent and get them home again, most Americans considered Rte. 66 to be the road to sun and fun. This was largely because the vets of WW II who returned to the hinterlands after their excursions into foreign lands (at government expense) remembered the few, but peaceful, moments they had enjoyed on the sunlit and sandy beaches of California. Those memories were formed prior to their late experiences on beaches far less friendly when they waded ashore on islands scattered across the Pacific.

The primary impetus for me to make the 2001 CHVA tour was the geranium pink and colonial white, newly restored 1959 Ford convertible that I (with many helpers) had recently finished. In that moment, picturing myself sailing across the western expanses in the big Ford, I began my stealth campaign to convince the better half that we needed to give the Ford a true "test drive." At that point the car had been driven approximately 60 miles with very little of that mileage done at highway speeds.

It is truly remarkable how a commitment to venture forth from a safe and comfy home aboard a barely "road-tested" accumulation of iron and steel that had been manufactured forty years earlier sounded so *rational* at that moment. Even more remarkable was the fact that my wife seemed to think the trip was a good idea. Truth is, that may have been before I got around to telling her that we were going to use the restored Ford convertible for the trip.

With relatives living in various communities around the Midwest, particularly in the states of Missouri, Kansas, and Iowa, it is probable that she was already drafting letters of appeal to a number of friends and relatives in those Midwestern states suggesting that we might end up camping in front of their house while the old Ford received some resuscitating procedures after the trip from OR to MO. In my wife's defense, I must admit that during the hours preceding our departure from home there were several *smallish* items on the Ford that required some attention ... things such as a rear brake light that had ceased to function.

(That occurred a few minutes before midnight and was the final item I fixed prior to climbing into my bed which is when I remembered—tools, spare parts, and a large roll of duct tape, were in the car, but I had yet to pack any clothing for the trip.)

The tour began in Chicago, but due to time constraints, we did not join the group until it reached Joplin, MO. (Deep down, it may be that my trust in the old Ford was bit shaky when I began to imagine driving the big Ford through the city traffic I'd have faced in Chicago.) Later I would know that this had been a wise decision for the ride through the traffic in L.A. as we crossed through that metropolis to reach Santa Monica was a horror. The traffic there was bad enough without the 100 local cars that had joined our group of 60 or 70 vehicles. Seriously, by the time we were safely in our hotel, sweat was dripping off my toes!

Nonetheless, by the time we had located our room (with ocean view), I think we both were feeling a great mix of pride until reality in the form of the following question came into mental focus ... "What on earth were we thinking when we left home in a car that had already suffered 42 years of neglect and misuse?"