

# CHVA -- National WEB site



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## Weber's Wanderings

by Gary Weber

(Verdugo Vintage Vehicles region of the CHVA, From the Motormeter)

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### *CHVA Western Regions Mini-tour XVIII, May 3 - 9, Monterey CA*

This year's Mini—tour was put on by volunteers Dave & Clovis Heath of Fairfield CA. They chose Monterey for the base of a hub tour. The ladies love hub tours because they only have to unpack and repack once at the motel.

Lu and I are the only ones to have made each of the previous 17 Mini—tours, and we love them so much we would hate to miss out on one. While after all these years it seems like we have seen it all, new attractions are always discovered. Besides, being with our CHVA friends is a major feature of these tours.

Lu's California Women's Chorus had their annual convention and concert in Newport Beach May 2-4, so we weren't able to head up to Monterey until Monday May 5, but VVV was well represented among the 24 or so tourers from the beginning. Driving proven reliable touring cars were Doug & Gretchen Caister, '80 Corvette, and Ron & Karen Millman, '50 Olds Rocket 88 coupe. Somewhat more adventurous were Director Don & Becky Harris with Caroline Ollis in the "new" '57 Chevy Nomad (only 135 miles on its restoration when they left), and Warren Westerhoim with old time member Dick Sonnie in Warren's "new" 1941 Chevy coupe. CHVA National President and long time VVV members Randy & Ellen Huebner drove their '66 Corvette to the tour from their home in Grass Valley.

The Southland was further represented by Temecula Valleys' Dick & Nancy Benjamin, '56 Packard Patrician sedan, Bud & Marge Gilroy, '78 Lincoln, Mary & Ruth Zepede, '69 Oldsmobile, and Alphy Norman with brother Roger Scrianni and Marty Fox in modern iron.

Those who drove up on Saturday the 3rd reported it was a good test of windshield wipers and water tightness. Heavy rain all the way. They were happy to finally arrive at our hub motel, the Casa Munras Gardens, and the great hospitality room the Heaths maintained for the entire tour.

The Casa Munras consists of a number of smaller units on a good sized lot. Unfortunately our group was not able to all have adjacent rooms, but we were still able to get together at the Heaths' and in the bar and restaurant in the original Casa. A plaque on the original building was inscribed, "In memory of Don Esteban Munras, last Spanish diplomat to California of the Spanish era, for whom this home was built in 1824. Dedicated by his great grand daughter Maria Antonia Field 10-28-51."

**Sunday, May 4,** the group made the short trip to "Cannery Row" and the famous Monterey Bay Aquarium, called "The Nation's finest aquarium". The core of this fine aquarium is housed in the Knut Hovden cannery building that was built in 1916 in response to World War I ration demands for Monterey sardines, in addition to the permanent exhibits that make the aquarium one of the most popular in the nation, there were the special "Mysteries of the Deep", the largest living deep sea exhibit in the world, and "Jellies - Living Art", a unique combination of graceful living jellies and fine art inspired by the marine world. Jellies may be pretty, they don't make cuddly pets.

After enjoying the aquarium our group was free to shop or enjoy lunch in the many fine stores and restaurants of the Cannery Row District.

**Monday, May 5,** the group left after an 8:45 drivers' meeting for a short ride beyond Cannery Row to meet up with Pebble Beach residents and Redwood Region CHVA members Fred and Phyllis Wildenradt. Because of their residency they were able to gain our group free entry for the magnificent 17 Mile Drive as it hugs the dramatic Pacific coastline and delves into the lush Del Monte Forest. The drive wound past The Lone Cypress — one of California's best known landmarks, Seal and Bird Rocks, Fanshell Beach, Spanish Bay, Cypress Point Lookout, Point Joe, and Carmel Bay. There were famous golf courses and fabulous estates (if you could see them) and the stately Lodge, built in 1919.

After this delightful tour the group made the short hop to Carmel for lunch and visiting the upscale shops.

Webers arrived at the Casa at about 3:45 PM after a pleasant uneventful drive up Hwy. 101 in “Yeller”, the ‘58 Edsel convertible. We were almost immediately visited by our dear friends the Huebners, then many other old acquaintances. We were pleased to see past National CHVA President and good friend Harry Ozols and wife Sandy attending all the way from Colorado. That evening a large group of us walked to a small French restaurant, Rene’s Bistro, for dinner.

**Tuesday**, May 6, we left a bit after 9 AM for a short jaunt up the road toward Salinas and pulled off at the entrance to the Laguna Seca Raceway, where we parked and cooled our heels for a bit. Even though David Heath had made a number of contacts to let the folks at the Raceway know we were coming, we seemed to take them by surprise.

The wait gave Warren and Dick and a large crowd of “technical experts” a chance to peer under the hood of the ‘41 Chevy and exchange lots of advice on how to cure a badly leaking radiator. Seems an improperly installed motor mount allowed the motor to shift just enough for the fan to take a nibble out of the water tubes.

As usual, CHVA is never at a lack for emergency service. There were plenty of extra coolant jugs available, and after pinching off some of the leaking tubes with needle nose pliers, three tubes of Alumina—seal and a blueberry muffin donated by Joe Kotlar stanchied the flow enough for Warren to drive back to town, where a radiator shop made a more “permanent” cure for only \$50. Warren and Dick were able to rejoin us in Salinas in the afternoon.

After the Chevy headed back to town, the rest of our group proceeded up a steep hill to the garage area of the race track and the headquarters of the Skip Barber Driving School. Here we were given a briefing on the single seat open wheeled racers in which, for a large sum of money, they will teach you the fine points of road racing.

The cars are interesting. The motors are 2.0 liter Dodge Neon fours, stock except for special oil pans to fit the low tube framed cars. The frames weigh about 600 lbs. and the car total weight is 1300#. They will go about 110 mph on the straightaway. A number of our folks got to “try them on”, and we sort of wondered how we would extract Doug Caister after he squeezed his big frame into the little car.

After watching people practicing on the track for a while, it was nice enough for the convertibles to “go topless” for a ride through the hills overlooking the course before heading on into Salinas. Our 19 car caravan proceeded up old one-way, flower basket lined Main St. through Old Town to the National Steinbeck Center.

John Steinbeck’s works maintain a unique and timeless popularity. He was born in 1902 and grew up and lived in the Salinas Valley, and life experiences colored his writings and characters. Some of his famous books include his first success “Tortilla Flat” from 1935, followed by “Of Mice & Men”, “Cannery Row”, “East Of Eden”, “The Red Pony”, “The Pearl”, and “Grapes Of Wrath”. He won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the Nobel Prize for Literature before he died in 1968.

The Center does an excellent job of illustrating Steinbeck’s life and works as one wanders through seven themed galleries of interactive, multisensory exhibits, settings, and film clips..

After enjoying these exhibits, we were only a short block from an antique mall that occupies a 1900 bank building. We were happy to roam the many stalls in the company of Russ Braselton, who drove to the tour from Carson City in his ‘57 T-bird.

**Wednesday** the tour headed down the scenic coast Hwy I through Big Sur to Hearst Castle. Lu & I had heard it raining all night, so decided that since the Coast Hwy. is lovely when the weather is good, not so lovely when it isn’t, and since we have taken just about every variation of Hearst Castle tour, we’d stay in the nice warm dry bed and pass. Those that did go to Hearst said the weather improved the farther south they got, and it was enjoyable.

The rain also subsided in Monterey, so we decided to make our own tour of Cannery Row, which celebrated its 100th anniversary as well as Steinbeck’s 100th birthday last year. Our first target was the 21,000 square foot Cannery Row Antique Mall inside the old Carmel Canning Co. building. We made some good finds among the 140 dealers’ stalls.

We followed up the antiquing by roaming the many interesting shops along the Row and searching for a restaurant that served calimari steaks for lunch. It turned into a lovely if cool day.

**Thursday**, May 8, the clouds started to leak a little just as Dave Heath convened the 8:45 drivers’ meeting. Undeterred, our caravan headed north through Castroville, onto the 101 for a bit, and then into the little town of San Juan Bautista and a tour of the old Mission. The rain we experienced on the drive quit and the weather turned nice for our walking tour and for the rest of the day.

The Mission was founded in 1797 by Father Fermin de Lasuen, who succeeded Junipero Serra. It is the fifteenth and largest of the twenty-one California Missions and masses are still held regularly

the Mission and largest of the city — the California Missions, and across the street regularly in the church. The little community that sprang up around the church still features many buildings from the mid to late 1800s, some of which, naturally, house antique shops.

After enjoying the Mission and its town we journeyed a short distance east to the city of Hollister and its industrial park, where we lunched in the stainless steel Wizard's Cafe, where all the seats at the counter are motorcycle saddles. Adjacent to Wizard's is the large Corbin-Pacific, Inc. plant, which is in its 35th year of manufacturing custom motorcycle seats, saddlebags, and fairings r4 all types for every kind of motorcycle you can imagine. Quite an operation, but it all came to a screeching halt as we toured the plant as there was an area-wide electric power failure and a lot of ladies were left with idle industrial sewing machines.

We retired to the lovely showroom and admired some of their vintage cycles, couch/love seats made from the "rears" of cars like the 'Vette, Viper, and '57 Chevy, and their wicked looking three-wheeler full-bodied roadster "Merlin", powered by a Harley V- twin.

Corbin also has a plant in the complex that manufactured a very sleek and aerodynamic electric car, the "Sparrow" but it was in receivership and we could not even visit, so we made our way back to Casa Munras for the rest of the afternoon. Some of the group continued past Monterey to take in a big cruise night/bar-b-q at the Baja Cantina —only to discover it had been cancelled.

At the motel Russ Braselton thought his T-bird battery had gone dead, but no jumper would make the birdie chirp. Luckily for Russ, Jerry "Screwdriver" Gorley, CUVA's ever willing master mechanic, showed up for the night and immediately diagnosed the problem as the starter (a rare one), took care of finding one to be shipped to town, and had it reinstalled the next afternoon in no time at all.

**Friday**, our final day, was the sweetest of all. It began with a tour of the Monterey Bay Chocolates plant in nearby Seaside. After a tour of the production kitchen where they produce over 100 varieties of luscious chocolate confections, we lined up to try samples and select yummys from the self-serve 40 foot chocolate buffet. Did you know it takes 400 cocoa beans to make one pound of chocolate? Don't know how many chocolates it takes to add one pound to consumer.

Our last stop of the tour on this fine day was a visit to nearby Vision Quest Ranch and Wild Things for a one hour tour of the exotic/wild animal facility dedicated to providing professionally trained animals to film and television.

A nice young lady led us by the cages of birds, reptiles, and carnivores and explained how they are trained for film work and what they are really like to house and maintain.

Friday evening we enjoyed the finale banquet buffet in the Casa's restaurant, which was closed to the public for our gathering. After eating, David and Clovis passed out commemorative plaques to the tourers. The women's' favorite car plaque went to Dave & Emily Gaskins' '56 Ford while men's' favorite was our own Ron & Karen Millman's '50 Olds 88 coupe. Long distance award went to Temecula's Dick & Nancy Benjamin (heck, just exiting their driveway is a long distance), and VVV's Warren Westerhoim won the hard luck plaque and a package of muffins for his '41 Chevy radiator problem.

After farewells it was time to return home. We shepherded the '41 back down south at a leisurely pace, with lunch at Andersen's Pea Soup Restaurant in Buellston. No problems, I'm happy to report.

Anyone ready to join us for the National Tour in Colorado and Utah in September?

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