

It's finally time for our annual CHVA National Tour. I've been eagerly anticipating this tour for a what seemed like a very long time. I know others have, as well. Head for the Hills was certainly an appropriate name for this tour. At least one of the Sunflower Region members began their journey in the **Flint Hills of Kansas**.

There were about 10 cars of us that met at a designated place



west of Topeka and traveled together to our first planned stop where we'd spend 2 nights, in Kearney, Nebraska. We left Topeka around 8:30 in the morning on Sunday, September 4. We arrived at our hotel in Kearney about 4 in the afternoon. The next morning, Labor Day, we visited a very nice Classic Car Collection featuring more than 200 historic automobiles from the early 1900s to the modern era. Most of the automobiles in this museum were the collection of one family. It is a great collection sharing a good variety of automobile history.



That afternoon we visited the Great Platte River Archway which arches magnificently 310 feet over Interstate 80 near Kearney. Inside the archway over 170 years of American history is presented in detailed displays and stories told as you listen on earphones provided as part of your tour through historic Americana. It's well worth your time to visit this place.

On Tuesday morning we packed up our bags and headed to our destination for this day to what would be our resting place for the remainder of this 2016 CHVA National tour, Rapid City, SD. We spent much of the day traveling through the **Sand Hills of Nebraska**. Kearney, by the way, is the Sandhill Crane Capital of the World. Every year during March and early April, over 500,000 sandhill cranes migrate on the Platte River valley in order to 'fuel up' before resuming their northward migration. Would love to visit there during this time. Maybe a future Sunflower Region adventure. The Sand Hills of Nebraska cover

about one quarter of the state. They're just gently rolling hills that I thought looked like velvet.

We arrived at our hotel in Rapid City a little later than originally planned, due to a few "repair" stops along the way. I will leave the stories of those stops for others to share. Our dear friends and hosts of this tour welcomed us with open arms and handed out our tour bags with information and tour books (guides) for the adventures we were about to encounter in the days to come. I was in our room unpacking, when there came a knock at our door. I opened it to see our son, Kelly, standing there. This was his first time to participate in a full tour, and we were delighted that he was able to do this tour. He informed me that people downstairs were wondering where I was, so I said I'd be right down. I walked into the hospitality room where lots of friends we'd not seen since last years tour, (some longer than that) were gathered to visit. I sat down to visit with some of them for just a few minutes, when someone asked for people's attention. Kelly then announced that it was my birthday. I later learned he had gone to a lot of trouble, with help from the hosts of the tour, to purchase a beautiful and delicious birthday cake for me. I couldn't have been more surprised. I had honestly forgotten that it was my birthday, because I was so excited about the



tour. He got me good. There was a chunk of the cake left over, and Sam Cleveland brought it to me between 2 paper plates. I had a plastic bag that fit over the plates, and kept the cake in the refrigerator in our room for the remainder of that week, and it came all the way home with us. I ate the last piece of that cake a week after we got home, and it was just as good and fresh tasting as the first piece. Unbelievable!!! One of the best cakes I think I've ever had - - - - - for more reasons than one.

An evening of visiting with friends soon ended so we could all get to bed after long days of travel for most, and rise up early the next morning for our first day of the tour. Each day is begun with a drivers meeting to announce plans for the day, and have a daily drawing for door prizes. This was a large tour so the cars were divided into two groups, the Jeffersons, and the Washingtons. This assignment was on the back of your name tag, so you knew which group you belonged with. Each group was on a different channel on the CB, so we didn't get too confused. Trying to lead 60 or more cars through traffic is no easy task, and they do tend to get strung out over a long distance

when we get out of traffic or on a highway. Modern cars are asked to stay at the back of the pack. The sight of so many classic automobiles traveling together down a scenic road is a beautiful sight to behold. Lots of shiny chrome and good lookin' cars. There was construction going on in Rapid City, but our leaders managed to get us through it whenever necessary without incident.



Now we're in the **Black Hills of South Dakota**. Our first stop on this beautiful **Wednesday** morning was at the Chapel in the Hills. It is a fascinating replica of an 850 year old stave church in Laerdal, Norway. The setting is lovely, and the architecture of the church is a real work of art.

Our next stop would be at the Dinosaur Park. What a difference from what we just visited!! Already we're seeing the diversity of this tour. A climb to the top of the stairs where the dinosaur sculptures reside offers a great view of Rapid City. The view of the parking lot from the top with all our old cars was great, as well.



From here we drove to the Journey Museum. This museum

covered a lot of Black Hills history from the time the Black Hills were formed over 2 ½ billion years ago, through the historic development of the Western Frontier. Many historical events depicted here. Downtown Rapid City is a lovely town. In the heart of the city is Main Street Square featuring fountains, and a nice place to sit and relax. Lots of eating places, boutiques and galleries surround the square. Along the city's streets and sidewalks one will see life size statues in bronze of our nation's past presidents. They're very nice and add a lot of interest



to the city. The buildings in the town are well preserved and also add interest to the historic town. That evening we enjoyed a Western Cookout at our host hotel, where we got the opportunity

to visit with friends, and be introduced to one another. I'm happy to say that Sunflower Region was well represented on this tour, and we also had a number of first time tour participants from our region. (*I'm not gonna' do numbers, because someone is sure to challenge me on that.*) We sincerely hope they all enjoyed the tour and will do it again. We were happy to meet our entourage from Smith Center, and Kensington, KS, whom we hadn't met before. Hoping to get to know them better as time goes by, and also coordinate a local tour with them.

**Thursday** morning we drove 21 miles to Keystone, SD to the Rushmore Borglum Museum to learn about the artist that created Mt. Rushmore. In this museum is an exact replica of one of the

eyes of Abraham Lincoln. It's hard to comprehend the size of this wonderful memorial, and learn about what it took for this man, Gutzon Borglum at age 60 to undertake such a monumental task. It's pretty mind-boggling. Here we learned of interesting behind the scenes stories that took place on the way to the end result. Earlier in his life Mr. Borglum had carved Stone Mountain in Georgia.

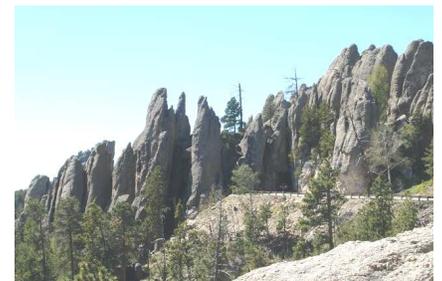


At Mt Rushmore, our next stop, a large upper level parking lot had been reserved for us so we could get our pictures taken with Mt Rushmore memorial in the background. Our time here



was brief. We had lunch on our own here and then returned to our cars for the remainder of the days activities.

An afternoon drive on Needles Highway proved to be very interesting, with 14 miles of twists and turns, impressive granite towers and low tunnels. Iron Mountain Road is likewise interesting with pigtail bridges, and interesting scenery. As you pass through one of the tunnels (which there are many) on this road, you see Mt Rush-



more in front of you as you come out. It's an awesome sight to behold. Lots of tunnels and wooden bridges among forests of pine trees along this route. Then there's the Peter Norbeck Scenic Byway which takes you on an awesome drive through some beautiful country through the Harney Range in the central Black Hills. This byway was carefully constructed so as not to disturb the surrounding environment. Again.....interesting to learn what it took for one man's persistence to accomplish this project. We tend to take a lot for granted as we enjoy these wonderful sights God has given us. The entire afternoon was filled with awesome views that we took advantage of for pictures, in turn-outs along the way, etc. This evening dinner was on your own.



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A drive to the Crazy Horse Memorial was on the agenda for **Friday** morning. Up to now the weather has been wonderful. It was cold and rainy this morning, but that didn't dampen our plans, as we were going to take a bus ride to view the Crazy Horse Memorial up close. We were able to get out of the bus to take pictures once we reached the place where we could take pictures. Crazy

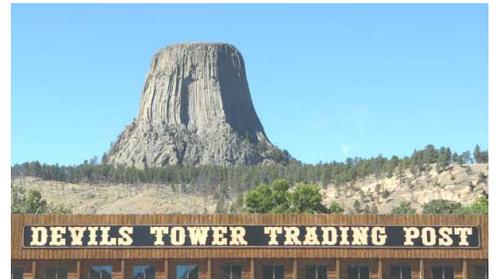


Horse was a war leader of the Oglala Lakota tribe and a prominent leader in the Sioux resistance to the white man encroaching on the Black Hills. The Sioux tribe reveres him as one of their great leaders. We left here to drive through Custer to the State Game Lodge where we enjoyed a WONDERFUL buffet lunch, in this beautiful, rustic building. The rain had pretty much stopped by the time we got here. After lunch we enjoyed a fun drive on the Wildlife Loop in Custer State Park. We followed the loop through the park, and encountered wild burros, who would prove to be very friendly if you had your car window open. I don't think any of us were that brave. There were very large meadows where groundhogs live. We learned they are not the cute little creatures we think they are, but they were fun to see. Occasional deer and/or elk, and wild turkeys were seen, as well. We were treated to beautiful scenery and wildlife along this route. Tonight dinner was on

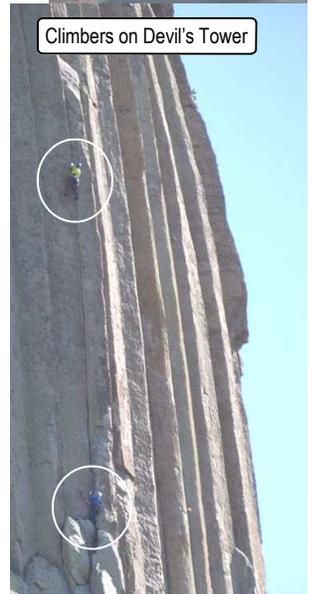


your own, again. After our wonderful lunch most of us weren't that hungry.

On **Saturday** morning we would be driving to Devil's Tower. We'd visited here years ago, but the area seemed very different than we remembered. A few of us hiked around the walking path at the base of the monument. Some went all the way around, and others went half way around. It was a little chilly, but a nice sunny day. Lots of beautiful views from the path around the base of the tower, and we also saw some wildlife in the area. There were a number of people climbing the tower



on this day. We watched some of them as they slowly progressed upward. One lone climber was VERY CLOSE to the top. I wish we'd had the time to stay there until he achieved his goal. I'll bet he let out a shout. Lunch was planned at the Ponderosa Cafe in Hulett. After lunch we traveled Hwy 24 through Aladdin, then took Hwy 34 to Belle Fourche. Along the way on the entire tour, everywhere we went we were treated to beautiful scenery, except for the times we had to drive through construction areas getting out of town. Ya gotta' do what you gotta' do.



The Badlands we visited on **Sunday** was something I hadn't expected. Actually, I'm not sure what I expected. It's a very different place of natural beauty. As the saying goes, "beauty is in the eye of the beholder." This is one of those places where one might not see the "beauty" in this area. This area consists of 244,000 acres of spires, buttes, beautifully painted canyons, grasslands, and more. To me it is fascinating, and I really enjoyed the drive through the area. It's

truly amazing. We toured through this area on our own, so you could spend as much time as you wanted enjoying the scenery and taking pictures.

From here we drove into Wall, SD, and visited the world-famous Wall Drug. We ate lunch here, and many did

some shopping. The restaurant had some really good pie, and a few enjoyed a 5 cent cup of coffee, just so they could say they had a nickel cup of coffee in 2016. It's been a LO-O-O-ONG

time since that was a reality. From here we headed west about 43 miles to visit Ellsworth Air Force Base. What a difference



from what we've seen earlier on this day. We were a little tired by the time we got there, but nevertheless we enjoyed the facility. Lots of neat planes displayed on the grounds, and some neat Air Force history on display inside. Dinner was on our own again, and again we had such a nice lunch, we didn't really want much for dinner. There was a movie theater and mall within walking distance of our host hotel, and we and Plemons decided to go and see the movie "Sully" that was showing there. It was a good movie, and we all enjoyed it. We ate a late light dinner at a nearby restaurant. Several others joined us there for dinner.

**Monday** morning we start out on another beautiful drive through Vanocker Canyon and on Nemo Road. Beautiful scenery. I love to see running water in mountain streams. These are called hills, but they resemble their big brothers,



the majestic mountains. Our hosts managed to find the most scenic routes from one place to another. We arrived in Sturgis to visit the Sturgis Motorcycle Museum and Hall of Fame.

Guys probably enjoyed this place more than most of the women, but most of the guys tolerate the women shopping, so we can certainly go along with this. It IS a nice collection of various rare and vintage motorcycles. From here we enjoyed a good lunch at the Knuckle Saloon. Service was a little slow, but once the food arrived, it was great. After we all got our stomachs full we headed west, down the road again. We

drove through Spearfish Canyon, where the speed limit is 35 mph through the entire canyon. All the better to enjoy the scenery. This is yet another scenic

route to arrive in Deadwood, (the heart of the Black Hills) where Main Street has been blocked off just for our cars. What a great sight that is - - - this old brick street with old buildings and vintage cars parked all along it. Deadwood is a fun place to visit. It is today known as the largest historic restoration project in the United States. It was a bit chilly this day, but that didn't hinder our enjoyment of this historic town. A few enjoyed trying their luck at the gaming halls, most did some shopping, and some visited the local ice cream/sweets shops, to partake of their goodies. Who can pass up an opportunity for ice cream, even on a chilly day. Here we had a bus tour of Deadwood, and visited the graves of Wild Bill Hickock and Calamity Jane. Our bus driver should be an entertainer. He was full of laughs. The bus company is owned by Kevin Costner, (star in Dances with Wolves), that was filmed in this area. Over 50 movies were filmed in South Dakota.

Another chilly day (**Tuesday**), and more scenery and fun. We drive to Hill City where we will board an 1880 steam train for a relaxing ride through some beautiful country. The automobile drivers get a break for a while. The train leaves from Hill City, riding through South Dakota countryside to Keystone. In Keystone we have lunch on our own, and return to the train at 2:30



for a return trip to Hill City. It was a really nice ride on a historic train that is beautifully restored. There are many historic markers along the train route. It was a very enjoyable experience that I would gladly do again. After we return to Hill City we



are instructed in our tour books to be sure to leave Hill City to drive to the Fort Hays Museum and Chuckwagon Supper and Show. The dinner and the show here were truly entertaining. What can be better than good food and a good show. I never heard of anyone who didn't enjoy that show. It was truly top notch entertainment. So glad we got to be there. The place was packed.

It is now **Wednesday**, sadly the last day of the official part of this year's tour. The CHVA National Board meeting was held in a room at the hotel. A good number of members attended and hopefully helpful information was exchanged. This was probably the best showing of CHVA Board Members I can recall at a National Board meeting. So glad to see that. One South Dakota CHVA member, Tom Price, arranged for a tour of a private salvage yard and museum close to our host hotel on this morning. Thanks to Tom for arranging that. John and I both went, and are glad we did. It was an interesting place to visit. We ate lunch with some of our Sunflower Region members, then back to the hotel to start packing bags, and loading the car for our return trip home, and making ready for the final banquet that evening. The final banquet was held at the hotel, and was a buffet dinner. After



dinner, plaques were presented to all the tour participants and then sadly - - - good-byes - - - until we meet again.

Throughout this tour there were numerous happenings with car troubles. I won't even attempt to cover all that. I'm sure there are people better qualified to do that than me. All in all, as far as I know, everyone ended up getting repairs done in a timely manner, with plenty of help and supervision. There are plenty of pictures to verify that.



This entire tour is such a blur, I can barely recall what we did on any given day. Thanks to the wonderfully prepared tour book to help me sort all that out, so I could share with others what a great tour was planned for us.

From fabulous scenery, western civilization history, and historic places, this tour encompassed a wide variety of Americana. Our tour hosts, Pat & Judy O'Byrne, and Rob & Sam Cleveland showed off their part of this wonderful country in a very entertaining way. Unfortunate things always happen when you're dealing with this many people and automobiles, and we think you handled it all very well. One can not control weather, construction areas, changes in contact persons, plans made ahead of time, etc. We thank you all for your efforts, and believe you pulled off yet another great tour. Kudos to all of you.

*When I offered to help with the tour, Judy asked me to write the article about the tour. I didn't really want to do it, but I do this per her request. To be honest, it is a good way to kind of relive the tour, and it really isn't all that bad. I have also asked a number of other people to please share their views, as well. I already have a couple of handwritten stories from some Sunflower Region members, and will type them up so they can be shared. We toured together, but there were times when people did their own thing, and saw things everyone else didn't see. People also tend to see things in a different way, so I hope there will be lots of submissions shared. I love to read views and opinions from everyone. Even if you have suggestions about what you'd like to see in future tours, I encourage you to not hesitate to share those opinions, as well. Hoping we will all meet again next year in Las Vegas.*

Photos by Tom & Dianne Plemons, Kathy Griffith and Rich Gibbs