



DEEP IN THE HEART OF TEXAS

April 28 – May 6, 2006

By – Alphy Norman



Our trip began on a Monday, April 24th with two guests riding with me, Mark and Celestina Norman in our 1972 Chevelle, Malibu. As we headed up the hill to Beaumont, CA towards the I-10 freeway to meet up with a group coming down from Northern CA. Our plans were to leave early so that we could catch the group before they got off the Interstate Hwy. As we listen for the CB chatter the time was flying by, our meeting time was to be around 9 a.m. Nine o'clock came and gone and yet no one in site. Thank goodness for cell phones, we had made contact with Clovis from Klassic Unique (they had been delayed because of someone's brakes that needed attending too). Our meeting place ended up further down the road in a Wal-Mart parking lot. A quick break with 8 of us (Bruno's, Gaskins, Clovis, Thomsen's, Higby, Cooper, Soul & Taffy, Clem & Betty and of course the Norman clan) then we were well on our way. Our first evening out was a stay over in Tucson, AZ – meeting up with the Sutter's and the Beeby's, then onto Van Horn, TX for my second day out, where our group picked up Gary & Lu Weber, that evening we gathered in the motels dining area and made a hospitality room (with permission of course), everyone pitched in with the goodies, dinner that evening had been forgotten.

Friday - April 28, 2006: Registration Day

Our next day would start out early putting us in the middle of RUSH hour in San Antonio, TX (mistake, but somehow all of us made it through to our motel, 2 went to the Motel on the River walk and the rest of us checked into the Comfort Inn. With just a short distance to travel that day, we left the motel a little later than planned. I had bought ten a GPS, but with the new construction on the toll bridges, the GPS was malfunctioning. Once we were out of the construction area, it then regained its calculations and led us to the Hampton Inn where 14 of us would be staying for the next week. Homewood Suites was another mile up the road. So I recalculated and we were on our way to the Hosting Motel. Several members arriving early had already approached the Gorley's Room; they did entertain us and said the check in time would be downstairs in the registration room at 5 p.m. What a wonderful job put on by these two great leaders, Jerry and Jeanynne and their co-partners the Toonies, Mary and Bob (who by the way, live in Texas and they were well appreciated by all of us). Registration packets given out, goodies bags and pre-sign up sheets along with wonderful o'deuvres being served. Re-acquainting with old and new friends was the high light of the evening.

Saturday – April 29, 2006: George Ranch

Our meeting and departure (7:50 a.m.) from the hosting motel (Homewood Suites). Once again our AEV'S paraded out of the motels parking lot, as we caravanned down country roads a huge black cloud, was just ahead of us, then we had an unusual down pour of rain. After a brief time pasted, we continued on with the tour of the George Ranch Historical Park of 23,000-acre working ranch, which began more than 180 years ago.

The family line dates from 1789 – 1971. Originally settled in 1824 by Austin's Colony by Nancy and Henry Jones. Since 1824, four generations of pioneers ranchers and farmers owned and lived here on the ranch. The family's original place is the core of the Ranch today. As we were broke into two groups of 20, we were then taken by wagon/tractor to different sites on the ranch. Our docent-name was Cody (which made the tour even more authentic, he even looked the part of remembering the past) Here we learned History of Texas, how the ranch began with its live stock, black smith works (demonstrations given) the homes that were built and the Tree House which one of the wife's (Nancy Jones) had planted and Oak tree which still stands today. (Group picture was taken also of most of us in the Tree House). We even got to experience the cattle being dipped into the vats. The ranch still is a working ranch as well as a visitor's attraction.



Original Cabin

Buffet Bar-B-Q was provided at the, "Guy Lodge Hall," built in 1903 in Guy, TX. The building features hardwood floors, hand painted stenciling on the walls, a decorative metal ceiling and small stage. (The hall is now used for community socials). Excellent food and again the social gathering were great!



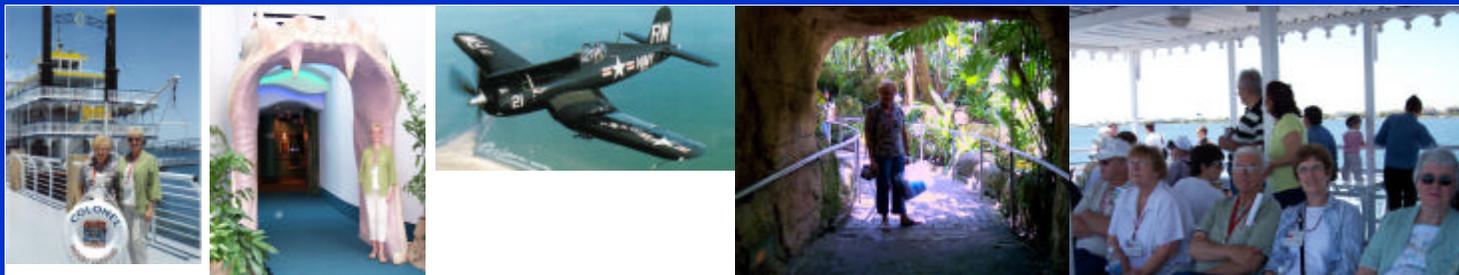
Sunday – April 30th, 2006: Moody Gardens

Our drivers meeting was held at 7:45 a.m. with a departure time set for 8:40. Jerry (our tour host) had announced that two of our long time CHVA members had just recently passed away, RC and Russ Braselton. A moment in silence honored these two great men, for they will be deeply missed by all who knew them.

This was a day filled with so much to do, first came the Aquarium (wonderful display of everything one could imagine). Lunch started in the Buffet Restaurant around 12 noon, we were able to drift in at our own leisure. A balcony area was arranged for our group to sit in, which made it nice for us to continue with our visiting of our CHVA family. Good food and Great Company.

The rest of the afternoon we would be on our own until 3:30 p.m. before heading back to the motels. Some visited the I-max theater, The Rainforest pyramid, The flight museum and many of us chose to ride, "The Colonel Paddlewheel Boat – A day of fun for all.

(See pictures on next page)



Monday – May 1st, 2006: Painted Churches at Schulenburg

Arriving in Schulenburg, TX and parking in a lot, we were then broke up into groups of 25, some going to two of these painted churches that were on our agenda today, while the other group visited the main one. Four churches had been planned on this tour for us to see, but time was running short. The first church had been originated by the Austrian and German's, European immigrants dating back in time to the 1860's; they came here looking for religious freedom and opportunities in the new world. Later came the other 2 churches. The centers of these churches are shaped in the appearance of Noah's Ark with beautiful artwork and wall decorations and ceilings, which were not completed until 1912, and still is operateable today. Also numerous stained glass windows, wooden pews, and many statues (3-D). The pulpit, communion rails and baptismal was also completed in 1912. Wonderful craftsmanship! Also in memory of the soldiers that had lost their lives during wartime, they have pictures in the front lobby of church and a garden with plaques to honor these fallen soldiers. After viewing 3 of the 4 churches and the cemetery, it was time for lunch as we headed toward the covered patio area on the church grounds to have a picnic lunch. Then many of us headed back to our motels and purchase fuel for our AEV's, it was a long drive back and none of us wanted to chance running low on fuel.



Before reaching the motel my vehicle started to make a noise like a bird chirping, so I had Jerry listen to it. In my findings, I decided to take it to a local shop (which by the way, the tour leaders made a copy of all the local auto shops in the neighbor hood of our motels – Thank You to the Gortley's). There I would leave the car for a day, while they put u-joints in and also the go ahead for a lube and oil change. They did such a wonderful job – even double checked the brakes and found them to be excellent shape.



A relief for me, since I was so far from home! The evening was decided on to eat at a local restaurant; many were tired from the long day spent, so they just hung around the hosting motel, which had provided meals.

Tuesday – May 2nd, 2006: Bishops Palace/Ocean Star/Train

My vehicle was in the shop and wouldn't be completed till around noontime, so in the meantime I rode with Stomper today and the kids rode with the Snyder's. As we arrived with our AEV'S in the designated parking of the Warf, we were then broke into the 2 groups, the Armadillo's and the Longhorns. One group would be on the tram ride, that lead us through the historic town of Galveston, viewing its beaches, antique buildings, beautiful old mansions and Victorian / Historic homes, while the rest of us would visit the Bishops Palace. About an hour and half was planned for both events.

A little history of this Palace.

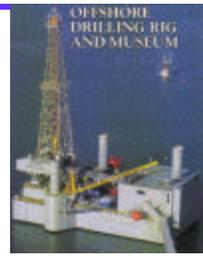
Colonel Walter Gresham, who had made a fortune in railroads, cotton and his law, built this Mansion. The Gresham's decided to build this mansion in the late 1800's (Craftsman from all over the world were summoned to build this home, which took 7 years at the cost of \$250,000. and completed on January 1st, 1893). This home, mansion, castle, palace, has some of the finest woods of its kind, it houses more 10 fireplaces (no two that are alike, and has been purchased from all over the world from its finest woods, marble, and stones) wrought iron works, chandlers and on and on. Most all the mantels wood-work has been hand carved. Circular Staircases, Elevators, Stain glass windows throughout the mansion and yes even to a chapel.

At the death of the Colonel in 1920, the Diocese of the Catholic Church purchased the home for their beloved Bishop Byrne's as a gift. That is how it has become known today as the Bishop's Palace. The Bishop lived in this Palace until he passed on in 1950. Today many tourists who are attracted to these areas visit it. A must see if you are visiting in Galveston.

Lunch was on our own, all sorts of good places to choose from. Our small group of 6 chose to eat at Joe's Crab Shack, very well worth the wait, others were here and there all over the Warf. After lunch we were on our own, several went to the little theatre and watched a short film on, "The Great Storm", of the 1900's, when the town was destroyed, losing much of its buildings (by the way, The Bishop's Palace withstood this Storm, with waters only that filled the basement, it had become a shelter for more than 200 people). Over 6,000 lives were lost from this monster of a storm; people then came together and rebuilt this once known town of Galveston.



On pier 19, our groups drifted in to visit an off shore Energy Center, called the.” Ocean Star”. There was plenty to see, the drilling rig and museum, the Offshore Pioneers Hall of Fame and the Educational Outreach Program. After visiting the museum and viewing the video we, (visitors) got to take the skywalk out onto the drill floor of the rig. Mighty high up above the water, but it gave us a great view of the skyline of Galveston.



Some of us stayed around a little while longer, and walked the downtown area, called “The Strand”, others chose to head

Back to their motels. Something for everyone to see and do, another fun filled day...

Wednesday – May 3rd, 2006: The Forbidden Gardens

This historical City of, “The Forbidden Gardens” has been recreated with over 1000



of detailed miniatures of places and their occupants, showing the life style of Imperial times. Some of the articles on display were – The Tomb of the First Emperor (our docent gave us history of each section of the city) Next came the weapon room, then Architecture Room – Calming of the Heart Lodge – The Forbidden City itself which was the city of Beijing (Peking) founded over 3,000 years ago as a frontier settlement to shield against the barbarian tribes. The city of Suzhou – The Empress’ Sedan Chair – The Empress’ Dining Table and last we saw a movie on the history of each of the above mentioned which our docent had explained to us as we viewed



each area.



Thursday – May 4th, 2006: Sterling McCall Museum

Today would be another early start, leaving the motel at 6:45 a.m. to travel approximately 125 miles one way, 250 RT. Since all of us are involved with AEV’s and the old car hobby, it was appropriate on our agenda, for us to visit a wonderful collection of these fine classic and vintage automobiles.



Tucked away in a little town of Warren-ton, TX we arrived at the Sterling McCall Museum. The cars ranged from the years of 1908 – 1967. Around 150 cars were on exhibit and were beautifully displayed in two large showrooms. The front of one of the building reminiscent of a 1930’s auto dealership, where it housed Deussenberg’s and Cadillac’s. Lots of memorabilia through out the buildings, signs, photo’s of Houston back in 1930’s, Gas Pumps, murals of drive-ins and classic’s, globes, model cars, replica of an old gas station, etc. A real treat for all of us.



It was beginning to get on the warm side, so our host; Jerry put a call into the Oakes Café to see if we could arrive a little early. The Café more than welcomed our group, where we were served a wonderful buffet (hamburgers – potato salad, Cole slaw, tea and ice cream) and yes, we even had cake, since it was Saul Hoffman’s Birthday (we then sang the traditional song to him (How many years?? He never indulged his



age). After lunch while members were finishing up their lunches, Joe Wiggins took a look at my emergency brake cable, it appeared to have snapped on me, while we were at the car museum, so has a good Samaritan that he is, he tied it up for me until I would get it back to the shop for repair.



Friday – May 5th, 2006: Gulf Greyhound Park

A late morning was scheduled (which no one seemed to mind) our meeting was at 11:00 a.m. and would be leaving the parking lot at 11:30 to head over to the Dog Races. For many of us, this would be a first time to one of these events. Now I have been to horse races, car races, but a dog race? Yep! A first for me! As we arrived our vehicles were to be parked in a secured parking area. On the parks Marquee they “WELCOME CHVA thanks for bringing your pack to the track”.

Gulf Greyhound Park is located in La Marquee, TX and offers live world class of its kind. There are Greyhound races all year round, it is known as the largest one in the world. It features 3 levels in the building with wonderful viewing, an air condition room that is all closed in doors. Dining area, and the betting counters. Before the races started, a wonderful buffet had be pre-arranged and it was an all you could eat buffet, and that we did!

If one does not know how to play the races, there are hosts provided to help us to learn about the races and how they run and explain how the betting goes. In one of my pictures, it shows Stomper showing the Flory's how to place their bets. MJ finally broke down on the 5th game and placed her numbers (I believe she won too, way to go MJ). I came home with \$9.00 to the good, so I wasn't too disappointed! Never did see the dogs get the rabbits, Ha!



Saturday – May 6, 2006: Free Day / Mamacita's Banquet

Saturday morning began with strong winds blowing everything over in its site (Umbrella's and patio furniture, flying around the patio) As we sat in the lobby of our motels dining area it had appeared like a small hurricane coming through. The news on our TV was predicating Tornado watches, and then came the down pour of rain, with this thought we had almost decided that would have to stay in doors for our Free Day on the town. This extreme weather lasted a little more than an hour, then it was over and very quiet.

Some of the members choose to visit The Houston Space Center; others went to the Boardwalk in Kemah (I wanted to go there for my first choice, but was reluctant with the earlier prediction of the weather). Five of us chose to return to Galveston and take in the Strand and the Railroad museum and have lunch. Spent most of the day shopping.

Galveston is a year round island with a 32 miles of beaches and beckons visitors to enjoy their seashores and their historic Victorian architectures and homes. After visiting the Railroad museum and having lunch, we then headed back to the motel to get ready for our final Banquet of the tour.

Banquet was held at the Mamacita's Restaurant where a private room for our group to be entertained for the rest of the evening. Wow, what a beautiful idea of decorations lavished these tables. Conversations, picture takings dinner and then onto the awards. Gary Weber presented these outstanding awards along with his lovely wife Lu. The first award went to Dick Benjamin – from Temecula Valley Car Club for his writings of, “Tech Support” featuring, “Unstoring & Antique Car”, accepting for Dick was (myself) Alphy Norman. The “Starator” from the Sunflower Region (and all its 4 editors) tied with “Headliner” from Costal Valley; editor Larry Bauman for, Best Newsletters, Short stories awards went to: Anecdotal with Chuck Phinney for “Desoto”, Eric Beeby for “Champagne Lady” and “The Yellow Rose”. Humor: Robert D. Butler for, “What's A Flivver”, Historical: Bob Trueaux, for Short History Of Buick's”, Feature articles, Joyce Flanagan from Klassic Unique's for, “BC and More 2004 and Organizing a Tour”, and B.K. Showalter from Oregon, for his many, many writings.

Club Reports: Larry Bauman, Costal Valley Car Show and The Gene Autry Museum. Club event Photo's – Dick Taylor, for Mt. Shasta 31st Annual Inner Club Meet.

Cars chosen on the tour were as follows:

40's – Bob and Carol Coates (1940 Buick – convertible)

50's – Bob and Crystal Hookland (1959 Oldsmobile Dynamic 88 Convertible)

60's – David and Sally Black (1967 Buick Wildcat – 2 dr.hardtop)

70's – Chad and Teri Wiggins (1977 Pontiac Trans Am SE)

Plaques then given to the members who had participated on this year National. Randy Huebner (chva president) presented the Al Newman award which went to Ray Council from the Sunflower Region for his outstanding job on the web site, which helps promote our National club CHVA, accepting for Ray was Kevin Stilley, president of the Sunflower Region.



Then it was time for our final goodbye's, one by one people left the building and headed back to their motels. A sad time for most of us, since it will be another year before we get to re-group again with the these members for the next National to Kansas. Another year well done by our gracious hosts the Gorley's and co-hosts, the Toonies. Thanks to them and to Marcia Petersen who rode with us and was my navigator.

Hope to see everyone in KANSAS.....

Pictures donated by: Alphy Norman and Marcia Petersen.