

SAILING ACROSS TEXAS

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Thanks to the Gorleys, this year's national CHVA tour showed those of us who participated that Texas is more--much more—than horses, cows, and sagebrush.

For example, boat trailers between the Alamo and the San Jacinto Battleground outnumber beeves on the hoof. As to horses—well, consider the fact that people around Houston prefer dog races to watching ponies run. And, oddly enough, one sees little sagebrush in Harris County for the area is awash in lakes, ponds, and rivers. That figures, I guess, for the entire region, including metropolitan Houston, is little more than the thickness of one Air Jordan sole above sea level.

Our hotels were in Webster, a suburb southeast of Houston more-or-less bordered by the ship channel, Galveston Bay, and the Gulf of Mexico. Webster, too, is just above sea level, making humidity a constant. Harris County has, in Mike Smith's lingo, "air you can wear," so the "hub tour" idea suited everyone. Unload the car once and you are done lugging luggage until the tour is complete.

There were numerous restaurants and gas stations near our hotels, a major plus as few of us wanted to travel farther than a block after a day on Houston's traffic-choked roads. Service was great at all those establishments, due partly to typical Southern Hospitality, but more because the former Enron employees serving as waitpersons really seemed to appreciate decent tips.

Marjorie and I traveled with the group to George Ranch, Schulenburg's painted churches, and the dog track, but our favorite outings were those that took us to Galveston. The Sunday tour of Moody Gardens and the Flight Museum were real treats, made even better because there was a full-fledged air show in progress at the latter. A few days later we took the trolley tour of Galveston's historic districts, an excellent way to peruse the city's historic past.

On Friday, however, we skipped the scheduled excursion to McCall's car museum and a junkyard in favor of touring an area where, as an eighteen-year-old college dropout, I learned some "real life" lessons during the late '50's.

Our one-car tour took us to Kemah's "boardwalk," through La Porte, and across a beautiful new bridge to Baytown, a replacement for the old tunnel that, a half-century ago, was the South Texas test track for twin-pipes and





Next we turned west and followed the north shore of the ship channel until—finally—we found the ferry crossing. The six-car vessel crossed toward the Pasadena side of the channel where we debarked within yards of the San Jacinto Monument. That edifice towers above the one-time battleground that is now a beautiful park. The battleship Texas is moored on the ship channel side of the park. The vessel is a favorite tour site for grade school groups.

Commissioned in 1914, she saw action in the invasions of both Normandy and Okinawa. Also around the park, there are numerous monuments to the battle that ended Santa Ana's attempted conquest of Texas. I had to smile when many tourists detoured those bits of Texas history in order to get photos of our well-traveled Ford.



I suppose that's as it should be; after all, like the battleship and the cannons, a fifty-year-old Ford is a true piece of American history.

It is unfortunate that the folks who snapped pictures of it next to those monuments to state history will probably remember it as a "Texas" Ford.

Truth is, the vehicle has traveled through at least twenty states since we started driving it on CHVA tours so it is not a "Texas" monument or an "Oregon" one.

However, after we sail the Ford across a few more states, it could end up as a monument to Henry!