

DEEP IN THE HEART OF TEXAS II - 2006..... by Mary Jean Flory



The night before leaving for the 2006 CHVA National Tour, we packed our (Marcia, Mary Jean & John) bags in our 1965 Buick Electra 225, except for last minute bags, Marcia and Mary Jean needed to add. The car was loaded, but we got it all in. It was agreed that we were not allowed to purchase anything large for our return trip.

I went to work for a while on Thursday morning. As soon as I got home we left and drove south on Hwy 75 to meet Frank & Norma Snyder at Beto Junction. We arrived earlier than we'd discussed, and didn't see their beautiful new '71 Buick Riviera, so surmised that they hadn't arrived yet. Soon we noticed them coming toward us from a van parked nearby. They had some problems with the Riviera and opted not to chance driving such a recent acquisition on the tour, so they drove modern iron, as newer cars are referred to in CHVA. We decided to eat lunch there before venturing down the road.



We made no plans about where we'd spend the night. We just figured we'd land whenever and wherever we were by the time we got tired of driving that evening. Around 7PM we decided to call it a day and check into a motel in Durant, OK. After a good night's rest, and some eats for breakfast, we continued on South to our destination. We stayed on Hwy 75 to Dallas, where we then took I-45. Took that route to Houston, where we traveled the Hwy 8 bypass. Road signage in Houston is not the easiest to understand. As navigator reading the map, I was having a bit of trouble with finding road signs and maps to agree. Traffic was bad, but not as bad as we'd anticipated. Weather and traffic up to now had not been bad at all. We did get to our destination by late afternoon, checked into our hotel, which was not the main hotel for the tour, and then went down the street about a mile to the main hotel to pick up registration packets, and greet our CHVA friends. There were only a few of us staying at the overflow hotel. Our hotels were in Webster, TX, just south of Houston.

Jerry & Jeannine Gorley greeted everyone in typical Southern hospitality style. They had prepared a wonderful welcome reception at the host hotel with plenty of munchies. Their able and valued assistants throughout the tour, Bob & Mary Tonnies, helped with keeping food dishes filled, and serving.

Our tour bags were very nice and filled with nice things. One thing that most of the women enjoyed was a very nice red, white and blue necklace/bracelet that has magnetic beads on it. For the first several days of the tour, many of us had problems with our room keys not working. It was decided that these magnetic bracelets were part of the problem. They were deactivating the key cards. A very nice tour notebook had been prepared with lots of valuable information in it, about the area where we were staying, Texas, and areas we would be visiting during our stay in this huge state of Texas.

In our tour bags is a very nice antenna flag of red white and blue with the tour title on it. Daily driving instructions say to drive with headlights on. That, plus this flag proudly flying makes us very visible as a unit while we're on the road.

Again on this tour, the entire group is split into two groups, the Armadillos, and the Longhorns. Our tour books indicate which group we are in.

Saturday morning was the first official day of the tour. The first day drivers' meeting was at 7:15 AM, and we were to leave the hotel at 7:50AM. Daily tours were kept pretty much on schedule. It was a rainy morning, but a lovely drive to the George Ranch, an 1830's pioneer stock farm, which is in Richmond, TX, west of our Webster, TX location.

This was a good place for us to begin to learn a bit of Texas history. When we got to the Ranch it rained off and on, but didn't dampen our spirits. We rode tractor pulled trams around the ranch and were given an interesting narrative along the way. We stopped at the blacksmith shop, where a blacksmith demonstrated his skills. We then visited the 1896 Victorian mansion. In another area of the ranch local hands demonstrated rounding up cattle, and running them through one of Texas' only remaining dipping vats, where cattle are run through a trough to help control bugs, etc. After our tour we were taken to a large building on the property, where we were served a Texas style BBQ lunch. By now the sun is shining. We were all gathered together for a picture op in the huge tree house built in a very old Live Oak tree. After lunch we had our pictures taken with our cars in a picturesque area near the parking lot before departing for the hotel, which will now be our "home" for the next week. These pictures would be used for our tour plaques. The drive back to the hotel for the evening was very pleasant.



On Sunday morning we get to sleep in! Leave time is 8:40AM. Today we're driving to Moody Gardens to the southeast, at Galveston Beach. Here we experience a much different aspect of Texas. At Moody Gardens one can visit the Rainforest Pyramid, the Aquarium Pyramid, the Discovery Pyramid, and a cruise on the Colonel Paddle wheeler, and an Imax Theater, where we experienced an African Safari. Paddle wheeler, and an Imax Theater, where we experienced an African Safari. We had lunch here at Mody Gardens.



It was such a lovely day; we did go for a ride on the Paddle wheeler, and as an added and totally unplanned attraction, we enjoyed the Air Show that was going on at the Lone Star Flight Museum, from our nice shady seats on the boat. Many local boaters were out on the water to watch the air show. We did visit the Flight Museum after the boat ride. The collection of vintage aircraft displayed here actually flies and participates in many air shows across our land. It is a very impressive collection. We don't tarry too long after returning "home" because we all know we have an early day the next morning.



On **Monday** we will drive to Schulenburg, which is a long drive a little North and West. No drivers meeting this morning, due to the early 6:45AM departure. YIKES!! On this day we rode with our friends from Calif, Randy & Ellen Huebner. We enjoyed that time to visit with one another, and it made the ride seem not quite so long. We split into two groups and visited 2 churches, then came together for a catered lunch in one of the churches yards, where they had a nice covered area with tables. After lunch we visited a third church. A docent was with each group to tell us of the history of the churches we visited. Each of these churches is unique in its' own way, and each of them is amazing. The craftsmanship in the creation of these buildings is remarkable. The fact that they are still standing is a testament to that. They all date back to the 1800's, and early 1900's.

Some were destroyed by fire, hurricane, or other disasters and rebuilt. The history of these churches and the communities where they were built is very interesting. These are definitely not your typical church building. On the outside they look fairly typical, but inside their décor is a big surprise to a visitor. They are incredibly beautiful, with intricate artwork, and design. We spent longer than planned here, and the hour was getting late, considering our long ride back to our hotel, so we and Huebners opted not to go to the Stanzell Model Aircraft Museum, which Gorleys had lined up as part of the tours for this day. We hear that was a very good tour, as well.

We go from beautiful architecture in churches, to beautiful homes in Galveston, on **Tuesday**. Since we are staying at the southern edge of Houston, the trek to Galveston isn't quite as long as the previous days drive. Our first stop is at a pre-arranged parking lot in Galveston. From here we split into 2 groups. The Longhorns take the tram tour, while we (the Armadillos) take a school bus ride to visit Bishops Palace. We have seen numerous mansions over the years, but this 25 room mansion is really magnificent. It has been recognized by the American Institute of Architects as



one of 100 outstanding structures built in the U.S. It is among 15 buildings included in the Archives of the Library of Congress as being representative of early American Architecture, and is the only building in the nation that is on both lists. The woods and other materials used in the construction of the building were rare, much of it imported. Again, the history that goes with this building is very interesting. It was built of Texas limestone accented with gray granite, pink granite, and red sandstone, during the mansion-building boom of the late 1800's. This,

combined with steel framing, helped it survive the 1900 Hurricane when so many thousands of other buildings were swept into the Gulf of Mexico.

After returning to the parking lot our tram arrived for our tour around town. I have a particular fondness for Victorian era homes, so this was an especially enjoyable tour for me. Galveston is touted as having one of the largest concentrations of Victorian architecture in the country. There are so many beautiful homes here. I LOVE IT!! I couldn't take enough pictures. Some homes are getting a bit run down, but many have been or are being restored. Our tram tour was an hour and a half long, with informative narration along the way. The tram took us along the beach front, through neighborhoods with lovely homes, and down thru the streets of the historic downtown 19th Century Victorian Strand district. I took so many pictures of beautiful Victorian homes, the beach, flowering bushes all in bloom, and other things here, that I couldn't begin to share them with you in this article. I have them all on CD to savor whenever I want.





After returning to the parking lot from our trolley tour we enjoyed a leisurely lunch and good conversation with Paul and Rosemarie Schneider from Michigan at the local Fisherman's Wharf. After lunch we walked around the area just seeing the sights. We watched a big ship unloading a HUGE shipment of bananas, toured the Ocean Star offshore drilling rig and museum, which we found interesting, watched the movie "The Great Storm", which told about the hurricane of September 1900, which claimed over 6,000 lives, and then strolled down the streets of the Strand, dipping into an occasional store just to see what was there. All in all, this was a pretty full day. We saw a lot, and enjoyed every bit of it.

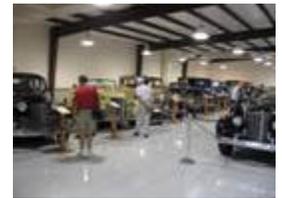


Wednesday's tour will take us in yet another direction, both geographically and theme. We will be traveling a Northwesterly route to the city of Katy, TX to visit the Forbidden Gardens. This is the country's only replica of China's Forbidden City, which was built between 1406 and 1420. It was located in Beijing. It is very detailed. My cameras battery quit



on me at this point, so I didn't get too many pictures. This is a very unique place, depicting a time when Emperors were the rulers. We believe it is worth your time to see, whenever you are in this vicinity. We'd likely never have visited here on our own, but we're glad we had this opportunity. On our way home from here we ate lunch at a place Jerry and Jeannine recommended, then took time to browse some local antique shops on the way back to our hotel.

Well, this is a car club, so it seems reasonable that we would take in a car museum on this tour. **Thursday** morning will require us to get up early again, but we know it will be worth the effort. We're leaving at 6:45AM again!! On this day Randy and Ellen will be riding with us. This is another long drive in the country. This time we're traveling in a Northwesterly direction to a little tiny town called Round Top, TX to visit the Sterlrig McCall Old Car Museum. One would never guess this little town would house such a wonderful collection of Automobile History. There are two buildings



containing over 130 AEV's. All cars are in pristine condition. The museum also has memorabilia, advertising signs, gas globes, and other automobile related items. We didn't spend as long as anticipated here, so Jerry had to contact the owner of the place they'd planned lunch to get them to open a little earlier than planned for us.all in the day of a tour organizer, eh, Jerry. Lunch at the Oaks Café was good. It was a buffet, and I think we all had plenty to eat. Another long day, - but we had our eyes full of beautiful automobiles, and our stomachs full of good eats, another beautiful day, and a lovely drive in the country so what else could one want?!!

Oh boy, on **Friday** we don't have to leave until 11AM. WOW!! That's a welcome change. We're lovin' that!! We're also to undergo a big change in our type of tour. Today I am to experience my first ever visit to a Dog Race Track. We are driving to the Gulf Greyhound Park, where we enjoy a delicious buffet lunch, with plenty of choices of meats, veggies, desserts, etc. This is a very fine facility, and is touted as the world's top greyhound racing facility. Seating was set aside for us so we could sit in an area together. We watched 12 races that afternoon. At first I was completely lost as to what one was to do if they wanted to bet.



Signs read: "Gulf Greyhound Park Welcomes these groups CHVA Thanks for bringing your pack to the track"

I'd decided I was going to bet on at least one race, just for grins. What the heck!! With the help of a host, a book, and my buddy, Joe Wiggins, I finally gained the fortitude to make a bet in the 5th race. Beginners luck, I WON!! As most gamblers do, I just had to do it again, and bet again in the 12th race. That time I lost, butI ended up 90 cents ahead, which wasn't too bad. I didn't bet too big, so wasn't really too worried. It was a really fun, new experience for me.



Well, sadly it's **Saturday** - which means this is the final day of this week of fun, good friends, and new experiences. Until time for the final banquet tonight, this is to be a free day, so we can choose to do whatever we'd like. We felt it would be a shame to spend a week in Houston, and not visit NASA. It wasn't very far away, so that's what we decided to do with our time. We did enjoy our day there,



but didn't feel it was as impressive as the Space Center we visited on last year's tour. We did take the NASA tram tour around the facility, and saw some of the things I'd hoped to see, such as the Apollo Mission Control Center, but we didn't feel there was as good a collection of Space vehicles. There were some very nice displays, however. We spent time walking around the facility, which had some very nice displays, and ate lunch there.

We went back to our hotel in the afternoon to change clothes and get ready for the final Tex-Mex banquet that evening. The banquet facility was about 12 miles away from the host hotel, so some traveled there in groups of several cars.

The banquet restaurant was a pleasant place with a nice room provided for us. The tables were beautifully decorated in a Texas theme. The meal was very good. The evening was filled with fun, food, drink, picture taking, and laughter.



The tour book had a quiz in it, which contained questions pertaining to things we'd seen and done during the week. There was a prize given to the individual who got the most answers right. There were some people who took that quiz VERY seriously. There were also ballots for people to vote for their favorite car. The categories were 40's, 50's 60's, and 70's. Those awards were handed out to very happy recipients. Writing awards were presented to individuals and re-

gions. Jerry & Jeannynne presented a thank you gift to the Tonnie's for being their right hand help before, during and after the tour. Jerry and Jeannynne were presented a thank you gift from tour participants for a job well done.



Every tour registrant received a very nice tour plaque.

We Sunflower Region members, were very proud of our member, Ray Council, who was the recipient of the Al Newman award, for his volunteer work on the WEB that helps promote CHVA and our hobby, in a very positive way. Kevin and Mary Jean were called forward to receive the official Tour tools, the megaphone, and the eight ball, that have been passed down for years to the next tour Coordinators, which will be Sunflower region, in 2007.

Hugs and good byes finished up the evening, in hopes that we will see each other again next year.

On **Sunday** morning we were on our own leaving for home. Snyder's had left very early in the AM to make their trip home in one day. Kevin S, also left early. Not sure when Edna left. We were not in any rush, as we had already decided we didn't have to be in a hurry, and would take our time going home. We drove right through Houston, instead of taking the bypass, as we did coming in. Traffic was virtually non-existent on Sunday morning. We drove to Ft. Smith, AR where we spent the night. We enjoyed miles and miles of beautiful scenery on Hwy 59 - now minus the parade of beautiful AEV's that we've spent the past week with. Skies were overcast, which makes it very nice driving the car. We never needed the air conditioner until later the next day.



On **Monday**, we spent several hours at the Precious Moments Chapel in Carthage, MO. Marcia had never been there, and it has been years since we'd been there. It has grown and changed considerably since we visited there. We arrived home at a decent hour, tired but thankful for all our experiences from the week before.

All in all the 2006 CHVA tour was blessed with good weather, good friends, fun events, and good tour leaders. It never seemed too hot, or too humid, as it could have been. We want to personally and publicly thank Jerry & Jeannynne for the excellent job they did in planning this tour. We know that it had to have been very difficult when one considers they live in California, and put together a tour in Texas.



Thank you Jerry, and Jeannynne!

We hope y'all will be a comin' our way in **2007** for the "Little Tour on the Prairie". We have some big Texas size boots to fill.

Mary Jean Flory, CHVA, Sunflower Region