

Heart of Dixie – CHVA National Tour
Sept 9th to Sept 17th, 2005
By – Alphy Norman



A Southern trip planned that may have been canceled if not for The Smith's and The Kiles who were to lead the National Tour of CHVA 2005.

Reservations had been made for the Heart of Dixie when the friend whom I had made plans to attend this event were suddenly cancelled due to the fact that her spouse had just suffered from a Heart Attack In the meantime I wrote to the leaders and explained why I had cancelled my reservations for the National Tour this year.

One late afternoon, both the Smith's and the Kile's called me up and said they still wanted me to plan on attending and would get someone to maybe share room expenses and travel with to the tour. That someone was to be my good friend, Gail Price and that we would be traveling with Joe Wiggins (Stomper, a long time friend of Gail's and Willie Price) in his 1966 Mustang. My conversations with the Smith's, Kile's, Gail and Stomper the next few weeks were very convincing that maybe I should attend. My only thought now was how and where was I going to fly into to meet up with this nice group of people. Was it to be Georgia or Tennessee? Since no one from either of my regions was planning this tour, I gave it the thought to fly in and travel with others.

In checking out flight plans, the decision was a direct flight into Tennessee with no changing of planes and the fares were great, so TN would be my destination. I confirmed with my friend Rhonda who lives near Nashville if she could pick me up at the airport, from there I would stay with her for 3-4 days before the National tour would begin. The next 4 days, I was escorted all over Tennessee.

Antiquing is a hobby of mine, which we did a lot of it is always fun for me, it sometimes makes me feel like I'm walking into a museum and back in time seeing a part of history that once was and will live on forever.

At The CUZ's Antique Center in Lebanon, TN; I got to see "The Legend of Sugar Flat Road" which was seen on "Hard Copy" and "Strange Universe" It is a head of a creature that now resides at this antique center and has been there for several years and despite the national television and radio exposure, no one to this day can attest to the origin of this most unusual creature. (A must see, for it is unbelievable).

One evening we went to Nashville, saw the OLD, "GRAND OLE OPERA", The Ryman auditorium.. Took in most of the shops downtown, went and saw the "Legends" and come to find out the lead singer was from Riverside, CA (actually March Air Force Base) which is not far from where I live, and he knew where Hemet was even, what a small world this is. Hard Rock Café was next on the agenda.

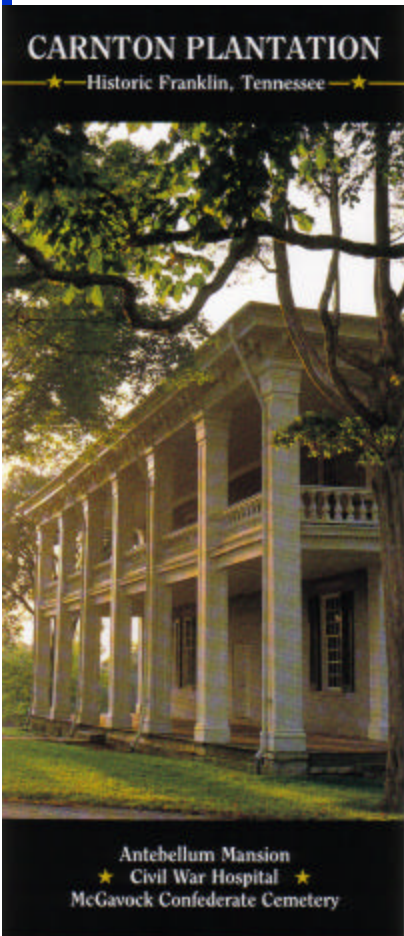
Another day was spent in Historic Franklin, TN, at the Carnton, which was on a sugar plantation an Antebellum Mansion, Civil War Hospital and the McGavock Confederate Cemetery.

The Carnton Mansion was Built in 1826 by Randal McGavock a former mayor of Nashville, after his brief judicial and political career, he began constructing Carnton, named after the old family homestead in Ireland, "Cairnton". The original issue of 640 acres was made to a Revolutionary War veteran who, in turn, sold the property to James McGavock (Randal's father) sometime in 1784. Around the turn of the 19th century James acquired an additional 500 acres along the West Harpeth River. After securing the property from his father, Randal began purchasing tract till, in 1831, the plantation totaled over 1400 acres. Finally in 1830 the house was completed.

On the afternoon of November 30, 1864, Carnton was witness to one of the largest and most costly battles of the War between The Confederate Army and Union soldiers. In 1866, the McGavocks designated two acres at Carton for reinternment of the Southern dead killed at Franklin with some 1,500 graves; it is still the largest private Confederate Cemetery in the country.

Saturday, September 10th – Nashville, TN: The day started off early with my departure from Watertown, TN. Upon my arrival to where the Tour was to begin at The Radison Hotel, I found the Registration Room for CHVA, but my party (Gail and Joe) had not yet checked in, so the leaders kept my suitcases and then it was off to Franklin to antique shopping with Bob and Ruth Trueaux. Upon our arrival back to the motel, everyone was pretty well checked in and getting ready for the bus ride to the Grand Ole Opry (which I had never been before) I am not a real collector of country music, but the experience to this great theatre will always be a memorable one!

Sunday, September 11th After a brief meeting and also a pause of remembrance for 9/11, we were then divided into two groups, the older cars from 30's to the early 50's were lead by leaders, Bruce and Shar Kile in their 62 Buick Electrica, this group was called the Gritt's with their tail gunner being Joe Wiggins (Stomper) in his 66 mustang. The other group, led by Mike and Sandy Smith in their 55 Pontiac were called the BIS-CUITS with their tail gunner as Bob and Ruth Trueaux in his 1951 DeSoto Station wagon. Leaving the motel we were generally driving with the oldest of cars leading out first. Our destination would be a quaint little town of Wartrace, were we had a wonderful lunch and entertainment at the Pick'n Parlor Restaurant. There were antique shops and a laundry mat (which many of housed, and gathered to cool off, for in the south the humidity is quite high and humid) what a good time for all of us who had choose this spot.



Photos throughout the afternoon were taken of us with the cars around this old time TEXACO gas station built in 1830. There was a group of us that decided to go to an ice cream shop where we would purchase some of our favorite ice cream that was well known here in this part of the country as Blue Bell Ice Cream. Hmm Hmm Good! Then back to meet up with the rest of the group.

After everyone was fed, which we had to do in shifts we were then off to the Bridlewood Horse Farm where they raise world champion Tennessee walking horses. There we saw the world Champion stallion "Generator", a value of \$4 million dollars. A brief history of the farm and the breeding of these fine breeds of horses, also demonstrations of how these guys preformed.

As we arrived back to the motel in Shelbyville, Bruce Kile met up with one of his friends from Shelbyville who went to dinner with us and then set up a tour later in the evening of his private collection for us to see. WOW, what a collection, this guy had everything. I got to sit in Tanya Tucker's Limo and he even had the car that was in the motion picture, "Driving Miss Daisy". This was one tour, I'm glad we didn't miss and it was just a spontaneous plan for the evening. When all of us departed, Gail, Stomper and myself left for the Ranch that Gail's son sometimes shows his horses at, they have their 5th wheel trailers on the property and we decided to have a camp out for that evening.

Monday, September 12th Driver's meeting didn't start till later that morning so it gave us plenty of time to meet up with the group back at the motel. Our next destination we were headed to Lynchburg, TN to the Jack Daniels Distillery and lunch at Miss Mary Bobos (A Taste of Southern Culture) this was once a boarding house back in 1908, the original structure was raised in 1867 as a traveler's hotel and is built over a natural spring. Miss Mary ran the boarding house until her death at 101 in 1983.

We were again broke up into two groups, the first group ate while others visited the town, shopped and then traded seats for lunch. And visited the distillery. As we boarded a shuttle bus, our tour guide Jeff Foxworthy in his bib overalls took us to an area to have group pictures taken and said that we could later download them off the internet.

Lynchburg population is only 361 where they make every drop of whiskey. We were shown firsthand the special process of this fine perfected whiskey that was established in 1866. At the age of 13 he (Jack himself) learned the art of making this liquor. The smell got so strong from the distillery that I had to leave (felt like I was ready to pass out) but found a group of people from our group sitting under a shaded tree. There were also exhibits throughout the grounds and a cool water fall/spring area where many stop to take pictures with Mr. Jack Daniels (a stone statue of course) and to feel the coolness from the springs. No whiskey samples given out, but we were all invited back to the reception/bar area for a COOL glass of Ice Cold Lemonade. Well worth the wait.

Our motel for the evening would be at the Radisson in Huntsville, AL to spend the night. Our evening would be to a German Restaurant which a group of CHVA members would gather and enjoy the fellowship.

Tuesday, September 13th. We had an early morning meeting and we were headed toward the U.S. NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, TN. Today, I would be riding with Rich in his 1960 Buick, which was well appreciated, he had air conditioning.

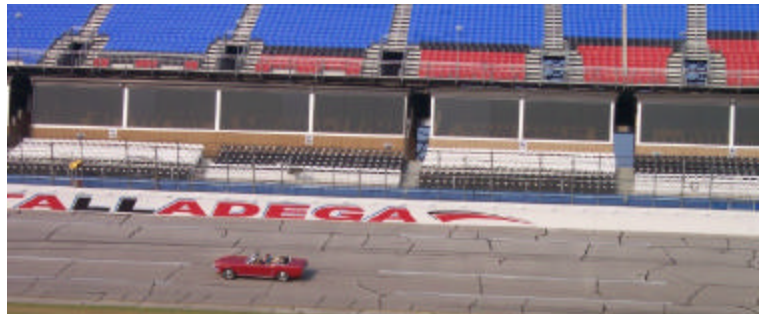
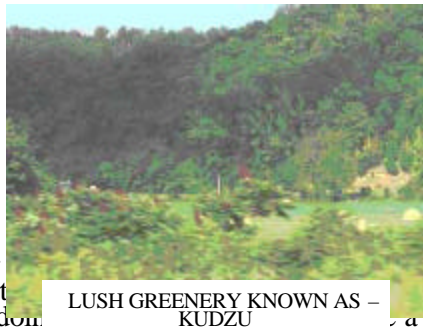
This space center opened up in 1970 and has the largest collections of space and rocket aboard the space shuttle. In exposition featuring one of the world's hardware as well as a simulation of travel experience, (which some of us road two and three times, many exhibits, also a presentation at the I-Max theatre, after the film a pre-arranged lunch was served, in the lunchroom, hamburgers, soda's, cookies and an apple and chips.

A long day at the space center and then back to Best Western in Gadsden, AL. The evening was planned that as many of us that could double up and ride together, we would meet for dinner at the **TOP OF THE RIVER RESTAURANT** (which had previously been recommended to us) On our way there, Frank's brakes went out on him and delayed him a little while, while the tow truck came to pick up the car and take to the nearest Sear garage. In the meantime, Norma and Frank joined the rest of the group, and Kevin took them to pick up their car the next day.

While traveling along the roadside, I noticed this lush greenery growing wildly around poles, most anything that got in its path way. I learned that it was a native plant to the southern part of this country, which was once a desirable plant and now has become a nuisance, because it grows so rapidly. The name of this plant is called, "KUDZU" and can be found in several states, for it takes up to 10 years to kill.

Wednesday, September 14th. No more late morning today, our travels will take us to The Talladega Super speedway, The largest at 212 acres, fastest and most competitive track in racing history. Today Mert and Sue Fowlkes asked if I would like to ride with them, in their 1949 Ford to drive around the Talladega speedway. I really like their car, reminded me of some of the kids I use to run around with, they had one just like Mert only in blue and one in black. What fun, some guys like Rich, John and Stomper were doing little more, lapping around the field 2 - 3 times, I believe little Stomper had the fastest speeds and what a thrill that was had by all of us. Cars were going so fast around, one couldn't even get pictures. Only blurs!

After returning back to the parking lot, we were then given a catered lunch in the area of the tourists grandstands with a Bar-B-Q and many of us were entertained throughout the afternoon by the driving school students racing on the track. Then our leaders traded groups and tail gunners for the rest of the tour. Off to the motor sport museum where many cars on exhibit and a Hall of Fame for the late Dale Earnhardt, Number 3 in NASCAR racing.



On our way home, Mike Smith led us to the Blue Bell Creamery in Sylacuaga where we sampled many flavors of ice cream. (Some even had two and three servings, of which all of them were delicious) Their motto is, "We eat all we can and sell all the rest". My kind of place.... I hopped in the 1957 Cadillac with John and Jennifer in their pink caddy. A little on the warm side, so I took the opportunity when we were at a toll bridge stop, to jump into an air condition car which was with Rich, again a well appreciated ride. Being from California we don't quite get the humidity that is here in the south.

Upon our arrival at the Holiday Inn in Montgomery, AL we would arrive at a crowded and stressful check in. Many Army troops from Iraq and the Katrina evacuees were already booked in the same motel. Gail and I, along with several others finally got a room in the North 40, a little on the scary side for it was so far away from the rest of the group and near a alley and dark corner of the motels parking area. So naturally 2 of the guys would escort some of us to the room. This would be our lodging for the next 4 nights. Restaurants were plentiful; we could walk to several places.

Thursday, September 15th. After the driver's meeting, we toured with the cars to a parking lot in Montgomery, AL for the day and walked over to a nearby train station where we saw a film of Montgomery and waited for the Trolley/Street Car to take us around the town. The group I was with, Rich, John, Mary Jean, and Marcia all wanted to visit the capitol and since at one time this capitol made history, I was game. We were given pins of the state of AL, by one of the employees that worked in one of the offices. Lunch was at Cool Beans, and the entertainment by the waiter was as good as the food. Time was too short to visit everything, but what we saw was well worthwhile. Our day was cut short because of the CHVA scheduled meeting was to take place around 3:00 in the afternoon. So back to the motel. In a conference room we held the meeting, several in attendance. After the meeting some of us gathered for dinner again, while others went to the hospitality room and down by the indoor gathering room of the pool area for wine and cheese and entertainment by our own CHVA members.

Friday, September 16th. Our travels today would take us around 80 miles to a little town called Warm Springs, GA; this was a day that Rich's starter decided not to turn over. We had just finished cleaning up the car and John and Jennifer were already in the car, when the car decided not to go, so Kevin had Rich, John and Jennifer rode with Kevin, while I rode with Stomper. Boy was it ever so warm that day, we all met at a GA Visitor Center where we stopped for refreshments when Rich gave up his seat to me in Kevin's car and rode with Joe to Warm Springs to have lunch and shop around in this quaint little town. Naturally the guys all had desserts of what is famous in this area, GA peaches. (Peach cobbler). I found a pink and white caddy model in one of the stores and gave it to John Hannon to put on his dashboard of his 57 Cadillac, and found a few Elvis memorabilia in one of the shops. Then it was off to FDR's Little White House for a tour of the home and the grounds.

After dinner, Rich and Kevin worked all evening to repair Rich's starter, with only a small light to work with, thank goodness they had some light off of the parking lot/street. I believe it was around midnight when they finished the project.

Saturday, September 17th. Our last day of the tour. Our short distance of 40 miles took us to Tuskegee, AL where we visited the Tuskegee Airman site of our African-American. Heroes. On July 19, 1941, twelve aviation cadets and one student officer, reported to Tuskegee Institute to begin flight training as the first class of African-American pilot candidate in the U.S. MILITARY. On March 7, 1942 the first class of these cadets graduated. Today they have hanger of a few planes and are in the making of a museum. From there we went back to the motel for a lunch break (John, Kevin and Rich went shopping and would later surprise MJ with a gift from her chicks). We then gathered up the rest of the group, then were on our way to visit Mike's garage in AL. A group of us rode with the Flory's and several others doubled up in other cars because of the parking shortage. Wow, what a collection Mike has, there was something for everyone's interest, including quilts made by Sandy, the women just enjoyed everything, even to the wonderful collection of hub caps that Mike has in a special yard of its own. What a wonderful treat for all of us to see and share.

In the garage also was housed, was Trueaux's DeSoto Station Wagon, which had an accident a few days before, we were happy to hear that both Ruth and Bob were okay and that it was said the car could be fixed. They proceeded to attend the rest of the trip in one of Mike's cars, I tell you, its true what they say, that people in the South are the friendliest people in the world, well it goes to show you, the Smith's are living proof.

Back to the motel to rest and clean up a bit, for the finale banquet under the Holidome. Good food and great company took place this evening, along with entertainment by Sandy's sister Sue who played a Hillbilly and gave her views of the tour. Awards were given out, and instead of plaques Mike had made special clocks out of hub caps of each participants make of car they were driving on the tour, along with raffle prizes that were hand sewn by Sandy. She even made the goody bags to carry our books, maps and etc. Lots of hard work from both of the Smith's for the great job they did with these trophies and gifts.

Most popular awards were given as follows:

- Pre 50 Mert & Sue Fowlkes and their 49 Ford
 - 50-55 Larry & Lynn Carter and their 55 Chevy
 - 56-59 Dick & Charlotte Klaas and their 57 Pontiac
 - 60-64 Rich Gibbs and his 60 Buick
 - 65-66 Eric & Carolyn Beebe and their 65 T-Bird
 - 67-69 Dave & Sally Black and their 67 Buick
 - 70-78 Randy & Ellen Huebner and their 72 Chevelle
- Tour favorite was Harold & Claire Brackett and their 39 Ford



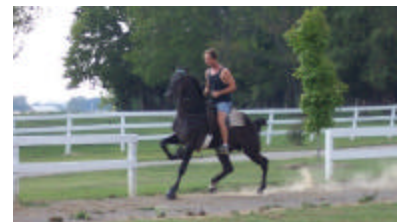
MONTGOMERY, AL - STATE CAPITOL



ALPHY NORMAN AND ONE OF THE CAPITOL'S EMPLOYEE'S



FDR'S LITTLE WHITE HOUSE



Al Newman award went to Randy Wright, special awards went to Mike and Sandy Smith, Bruce and Shar Kile for a their outstanding job on their greatly appreciated efforts of this Heart of Dixie Tour.

We've made so many friends and now its time for us to part. Always at the end of the tour it is sad for many of us to bid our farewells, Naturally lots of pictures taken throughout the evening, for this was a lifetime memory for many others and me.

Sunday, September 18th. Many of us planned to leave early, and many were still in the parking lots, bidding their farewells, where did the time go, guess that saying goes, Time Flies When Your Having Fun!

This trip did not end for me this day; I rode back to GA with Joe and Gail and stayed for 4 days there. Coming back into the GA area, Harry and Dolly spent the evening with us, we went out to dinner and they stayed the night at Joe's. Next morning they came over for breakfast, and spent most of the day visiting.

Another extended trip was planned. Harry, Dolly, Tony, Bennett, Lois, Judy and Pat dropped by Gail's to invite us to go with them to North Carolina, but Gail and I had made other plans, and the group went on their way, which later the Gorley's caught up to the group.

I got to visit with some of Gail's friends, a trip to Dahlonga for antiquing amongst several other places and a dinner at one of the NASCAR (Bill Elliot's Restaurant, who was well known in this area, for he was born and raised here). Didn't get to see him, but his brother came into the restaurant with some of his buddies. Four days went by fast, and Harry and Dolly came back to Gail's and took me to the Atlanta airport for my flight home to Ontario, CA.

This was an experience for me, for I had never traveled that far alone before, but what wonderful memories that will be pressed forever in my heart.



SOME OF THE SUNFLOWER REGION AT THE FINAL BANQUET - KEVIN, MARCIA AND ALPHY



CHVA VEHICLES HEADING DOWN THE HWY



U.S. NASA'S MARSHALL SPACE FLIGHT CENTER



DOLLY AND ALPHY NORMAN AT TUSKEGEE, AL MUSEUM



GALS IN LAUNDERMAT COOLING OFF - WARTRACE, TN



MARCIA PETERSON & JACK DANIELS

