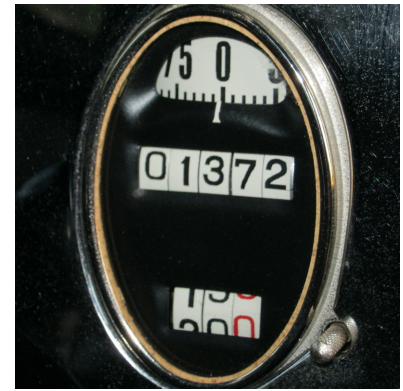


How We Made the 400 Mile Natchez Trace Tour Last 5,967 Miles

From the Little Canyon to the Grand Canyon

Sharon and Orville Booth Palmetto A's of South Carolina

On Thursday, April 6, we left home in Columbia, SC headed towards Franklin, TN, to join the Model A Ford Club of America for the 2011 MAFCA Natchez Trace National Tour. Our odometer had 1372 miles on it. By nightfall, we'd made it to Chattanooga, TN and realized we were a day ahead of schedule. We decided to take a side trip to the Little Canyon National Preserve, near Fort Payne, AL. The clouds were threatening rain, but it only sprinkled for a few miles as we drove through to Chattanooga. This was a delightful drive with the dogwoods and redbuds in full bloom. We skirted around Huntsville, AL on Hwy 79 into the town of Winchester, TN. There, we spent the night before connecting to Alt 41 that took us directly into Franklin.



Dogwoods Along the Natchez Trace Trail

Arriving at the Marriott in Franklin before noon, we spent our time registering, checking out the Swap Meet and auction items, meeting other clubbers and admiring their A's. Soon it was time to take the bus to the Grand Ole Opry. We enjoyed a great evening of entertainment starring Little Jimmy Dickens. Sunday, we attended the nearby Trinity Baptist Church, then returned to the Marriott to visit and admire the cars before the banquet that evening.

We started out early Monday in order to stop at the famous Loveless Café for a scrumptious breakfast. The Howlands from Kansas invited us to travel the Trace with them and we enjoyed visiting with them during the stops along the way. Later in afternoon, we arrived in Tupelo and had barely checked into our motel when it began to pour down rain. There were severe storm warnings for the area, but by morning it was clear and sunny again.

Tuesday morning, we all met at the Tupelo Antique Car Museum for a group picture and to tour the fantastic display of antique automobiles. Later in the day, down the Trace, we took a wagon tour of the French Camp Academy, this is a Presbyterian boarding school for children coming from bad home situations. The children are required to do work around the campus and in their group homes to help with expenses. After a very tasty lunch, at a restaurant right on the Trace run by the Academy, we traveled on to spend the night in Canton, MS.

Wednesday afternoon we arrived at the end of the Trace in Natchez. We had just enough time to get ready before taking the shuttle over the Mississippi River to Vidalia, LA. The grand finale' banquet was held here and we said our goodbyes to the group.

The first destination of our extended tour began the next morning as we crossed the Mississippi River bridge into Vidalia headed to Round Rock, TX. In Leesville, LA, near the Texas border I spotted the "Little Easy" Muffuletta Co. This place had a great muffuletta sandwich, my first, and we were surprised when we met the owner and discovered he was from Columbia, SC!

While visiting friends in Round Rock, we noticed that the tread was wearing thin on our tires. So, we called a local MAFCA member only to find out there was no dealer nearby. We decided to head for Wallace Wade's Custom Tires in Dallas. Although, we normally stay on the back roads, the directions sent us on I-35E right through downtown. After purchasing the tires, we were directed to Hand's Elderly Car Care in Grand Prairie where Robert Hand and his helper balanced and mounted the tires. It was a treat to see some of their fine

restorations in process at their shop. We found a motel nearby and discovered we were only a few miles from old friends from Michigan. We called and made arrangements to have lunch with them the next day. Because of the many fires to the north and west of Fort Worth, we thought we might have to forego our next planned destination of Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico. By checking maps and newscasts, we settled on a route that would take us above the worst of the fires and around Possum Lake on down to Hwy 380.

When on this back road, near Haskell, we met the most interesting character on this trip, Gene Glasscock. He was sitting on the seat of a covered wagon with his dog, Bug. His mules Kitty and Katie were tethered nearby. We stopped and chatted a bit, but had to cut it short. It was getting late and we needed to find a motel for the night.

Later, we discovered he's a famous Longrider who rode his horse Cactus, in 1980, from the Arctic Circle in Canada to the Equator in Ecuador. Also, beginning in 2002, for three years, he traveled 20,000 miles on horseback to the capitals of all 48 contiguous states. His current trip started at the Pacific Ocean in San Diego, in September of 2010, with the Atlantic Ocean in Georgia as his destination--and we thought we were adventurous!



We reached Carlsbad and spent the night before heading to the Caverns in the morning. This was our second visit, so we decided to walk the mile into the Caverns rather than take the elevator down. This was a great decision, as you see a lot more walking. The self-guided audio tour is a bargain at \$3. We finished at noon and resumed our drive towards the Grand Canyon in Arizona. After having escaped the fires of Texas, we came very close to a small one being battled along the highway just north of Carlsbad.

New Mexico is a very wide state. There was very little traffic and easy driving on Hwy 380 and Hwy 60. One interesting stop along the way was the site where a cub was found clinging in the top of a tree after a fire. This was the bear who became the original Smokey Bear. We also came upon the Valley of Fires. It is an area covered in lava rock from a volcanic eruption of years ago, which we found very interesting. We headed toward Interstate 25 to find a motel, but had to drive quite a distance before spotting one in Socorro. This made for a very long day of 287 miles, especially when you consider we didn't start out until noon.



Crystal Forest, Petrified Forest in Arizona

A great side trip was through the Petrified Forest and Painted Desert National Park. Truly the Golden Age Pass was a great purchase ten years ago! However, the week we were in Arizona was National Parks Week when they do not collect any fees. The multitude of beautiful rock logs scattered throughout the Park was something we had not expected. At the entrance to the Painted Desert side of the Park is a monument to Route 66 with a unidentifiable stripped out shell of an antique auto. It was amusing to see folks taking pictures of the shell as we drove up.

We continued on to spend the night in Flagstaff. We wanted to get an early start for the south rim of the Grand Canyon. This was our first trip to the south side, having visited the north rim several years ago. There is no way to describe the vastness, depth, or show the gorgeous colors of the rock layers. It was very interesting

to see several small rain showers out over the Canyon. At first they appeared to be smoke and only a few sprinkles fell on us as they made their way toward us.

We returned to Flagstaff for the night and found the Ponderosa Baptist Church to worship with the next morning on Easter Sunday. They also invited us to share their fantastic potluck Easter dinner. Monday morning we headed back north along the eastern side of the Canyon into Navajo land and the Monument Valley.

It was getting quite cold at the higher elevations and the high winds that we had experienced all through Texas and New Mexico continued. The flat lands with the huge rock monuments, canyons and mesas made for beautiful scenery as we headed into the southeast corner of Utah and southern Colorado.

It was a treat to stop and tour Mesa Verde National Park between Cortez and Durango CO. It was well worth the 26 mile drive off the highway to see the ancient Indian ruins. Because of the cold and threat of snow, about 4 feet at Wolf Creek Pass, we decided to return into New Mexico from Durango, CO rather than follow our original plan to travel along southern Colorado. In Durango, we were directed by the motel manager to Francisco's Restaurant, where they had \$12 dinner specials which were superb. Wished we could have been in town during the day to check out the many interesting shops downtown.

Our route out of Durango led us up onto a mesa with beautiful views and lovely farms. However, the clouds started to roll in and we began to notice snow flurries in the air. As we climbed higher in the San Juan Mountains, snow began to stick to the trees and our windshield alerted us to the fact that RainX does not work with snow. It was not long before we began to see some significant snow along the road. The wind was still blowing hard and started snowing steadily with drifts forming across the road in places. Soon, we were meeting snow plows, whose drivers are probably still talking about us. We actually only had to drive in slush for about a half mile, which was more than enough for a curvy mountain road having no guard rails.

When we drove into the town of Dulce, the sun was out and we saw no problem with keeping to Hwy 64 on our way to Taos. We found that spring had arrived in Taos with many beautiful flowering trees and shrubs. It was an amazing town with many of their buildings finished in the southwestern adobe style with peach-colored stucco. Finally out of the mountains, we left the snow behind us and headed for I-25 thinking we could get a motel around the interstate but were mistaken and had to drive up to Raton to find one. In the morning, we awoke to find our car was covered with an inch of snow.

We decided that we were definitely heading south to Amarillo TX to find warmer weather. We had a small mishap as the tire on our small trailer disintegrated just south of Dumas. Returning to Dumas, after unbolting the trailer and parking it behind a guard rail, we were directed by a Wal-Mart employee to the Palser's 4 Seasons Mower Shop whose owner searched his inventory until he found a tire that would work for the trailer. He then allowed us to work on a bench in his shop to mount it and filled it with air, all the while discussing the Model A and our trip.

We decided to stay the night in Amarillo. We noticed that the famous Route 66 Big Texas Steak Ranch was nearby so decided to check it out. We did not attempt to eat the 72 oz steak which is free if you can eat it all with baked potato, 3 shrimp, salad and roll! The food was great, and it was a fun evening with very entertaining and friendly wandering musicians.

Our drive across the mid-section of Oklahoma, over the plains, was uneventful starting on Hwy 60 and connecting again with Hwy 64 south of Muskogee. The weather was perfect with temperature in the 70s. We crossed over into Arkansas at



Fort Smith and began to see signs of flooding and tornado damage. This was especially evident as Hwy 64 passed through Vilonia, the site of major tornado damage. We were concerned with the flooding, so we decided to cross the Mississippi at Memphis over the I-40 bridge then reconnect to Hwy 64 to drive across Tennessee. This proved to be good driving, it is four lanes with little traffic, and although there was some construction, it did not slow us down.

Saturday night we were entertained at a small neighborhood auction in the rural town of Crump, TN. In the morning, we drove a few miles in the rain to Sunday morning services at Faith Baptist Church, outside of Savannah, TN. After church the rain had stopped and we headed for Chattanooga to spend the night. Skirting around Chattanooga on the interstate, we crossed over to Hwy 411 and onto the beautiful Foothills Parkway. We made our way over to Cades Cove in Tennessee, where we decided to camp for the night in the National Park Campground.

This is the first time we had taken the 11 mile driving tour loop around Cades Cove in The Great Smoky Mountains National Park. It was such a scenic trip that we took it twice; in the afternoon when we first arrived, and later after we had set up camp. The later afternoon tour was definitely the best, as we saw turkeys, lots of deer and a mother bear with three cubs - up close and personal. The weather was perfect for camping except for the wind that howled through the trees all night long!

In the morning, we headed to our favorite breakfast spot in Gatlinburg, TN, the Pancake Pantry. They have the most amazing apricot-lemon pancakes with pecans and whipped cream! We deviated from our usual path through Hot Springs, TN to Asheville, NC. We turned south in Hot Springs for an adventurous mountainous road that was very curvy and steep but had amazing scenery. Even though it would have been possible to make it home, we decided to spend the night in Hendersonville, NC. It was threatening to rain and there was no need to hurry. In the morning the sun was out and we took Hwy 11, just inside SC over to Gaffney and down to Union. Then we took Hwy 176 the rest of the way home. Praise the Lord for His protection, guidance and provision over all 5,967 miles!



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