

Everything Old is New Again.

Grand Indiana Auto Tour 12 • August 9-12, 2006



As the saying goes, “Everything old is new again,” and this year’s Grand Indiana Auto Tour (GIAT) was no exception. We’re “old” in that this tour marked our 12th annual gathering since GIAT’s humble beginnings as an Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicle sponsored event over 10 years ago.

Originally designed to enhance tourism in our great state, GIAT has traveled to/through all 92 Indiana counties over the course of time. There were a mere 21 cars on that first tour on August 30, 1995, but a good number of those hearty few have attended all or most tours since. Our “new”ness is proudly heralded by GIAT becoming it’s own official VMCCA chapter in 2006. As mentioned previously, we’d operated as a BMV-sponsored event for many years. During those early days, the GIAT was grandfathered into the Veteran Motor Car Club of America by our friends Bill and Jane Johnson of the Kentucky Region—both indispensable to getting things up and running. After many years of faithful sponsorship, the BMV said goodbye to it’s involvement with GIAT, leaving us to face the decision to either disband or carry on. Little did they know the monster they’d created! A volunteer committee was quickly formed during our ‘04 annual meeting, and our 1st solo tour was planned and deftly executed by Bernie and Cheryl Barber & Mike and MaryJo Siney the following summer. It was during our ‘05 annual meeting that a slate of officers was elected and the charge given them to create the Grand Indiana Auto Tour as a non-profit entity and petition the VMCCA to recognize us as an official chapter. I’m happy to say both goals were met whilst volunteer hosts Leo and Phyllis Beavin & Jack and Pauline Spitznagel were hard at work planning/executing the ‘06 tour.

And what a tour it was! Gathering at the Ramada Riverfront in Jeffersonville, IN, we held our opening banquet

Wednesday evening with 101 attendees and 49 cars rounding out the group. Tour regulars and newcomers alike quickly bonded - by sharing stories, good natured teasing, and many handshakes/hugs ensured a good time was had by all.

Thursday, August 10, 2006

After a quick driver’s meeting and opening prayer by our “unofficial” chaplain, Pastor Charlie Blakey, we headed out on a 40 mile trek to Salem Speedway (for a little oval track racing, of course). What a thrill to see those classics running around the same oval where many famous race car drivers have cut their teeth: A.J. Foyt, Bobby Unser, Al Unser and Mario Andretti (to name a few). A special thanks to Mr. Richard Deaton for his warm welcome during our visit.

After a few more laps around the track, the group traveled west on scenic Indiana Highway 56 and headed to our lunch

destination—The Gasthof Amish Restaurant in Montgomery. The Gasthof’s offerings were so tasty my wife exclaimed it was a place she would “definitely” return to (no higher praise will any food establishment get from her, I might add).

Once everyone was well satisfied we enjoyed a bit of free time to shop, explore the local countryside & antique shops or, if they preferred, tour an Amish buggy factory.

Mother nature had some plans of her own, unfortunately. As the last few of us broke away to do our own thing a horrific thunderstorm moved in, blanketing the area with a downpour that caused more than one of our group to drown out, short out, pull over, or just plain push on to the hotel. Prayers were answered aplenty that afternoon as everyone eventually made it back to Jeffersonville in one piece without suffering personal or vehicular damage.

Despite the trials of the day, the evening was capped off with a bluegrass concert (which has become a Tour tradition), courtesy of a few musical participants.

Friday, August 11, 2006

With a short driver’s meeting and prayer complete, host Leo Beavin split



GIAT participants stretch their legs at Salem Speedway before taking a turn around the track during the 2006 Tour.

the group roughly in two, sending us to tour either the Howard Steam Boat Museum or Schimpff's Candy Factory and Museum in town. Beautifully ornate, the former Howard Family Mansion now houses Jefferson's tribute to the bygone era of steam power upon the mighty Ohio, complete with period furnishing, tools, artifacts, and a vintage engineroom bell a lucky few of us were able to ring upon exiting the museum. In the mean time, Shimpff's Candy Factory & Museum guests were experiencing a taste of the country's oldest operating candy store originally built by Gustav A. Schimpff back in 1891, including displays of antique candy dispensers, tin molds, candy holders, and also pieces of display-only vintage candy.

After a full morning of museum browsing, it was time for lunch and, to our delight, a dinner cruise courtesy of Star Cruise Ships. After regrouping at our hotel, we found ourselves parking the classic cars and walking a few short paces to board the *Star* and enjoy a two hour journey up and down the Ohio. The captain and crew made us landlubbers feel at home, treating us to delicious food and a nice, leisurely ride. Many of us also took the opportunity to have memento photos taken as a remembrance of this great part of the '06 tour.

Even more great activities were in store, though. Once back on dry land, we got into our cars and headed to Falls of the Ohio State Park. Although the name implies waterfalls, the Falls are actually cascading rapids/cataract falls. They cause the Ohio River to drop 26 feet in elevation over a two-and-a-half-mile stretch. The park features a spectacular interpretive center overlooking the fossil beds which provide once living proof that an ocean and coral reef existed more than 350 million years ago in what is now Clark

County. Nowhere else in the world does such a large, exposed fossil reef of this period exist. More than 220 acres! Among other interesting historical tidbits we learned during our visit: Meriwether Lewis and William Clark began their famous 1803 expedition to chart their overland route to the Pacific Ocean from the Falls of the Ohio, not St. Louis as usually believed. This stop was a gem of discovery, as many of us (myself included) had no idea this took place in Indiana.

After dinner, the group gathered downtown at Warder Park to provide a classic car show for the locals during their summer concert series. We were treated to a warm welcome by Mayor Robert Waiz, Jr., and serenaded by the melodious sounds of a Louisiana-style dixieland jazz concert which made the perfect ending to a wonderful day.

Saturday, August 12, 2006

Driver's meeting & prayer, and then we were off, crossing the Clark Memorial Bridge into Kentucky on our way to the Clyde Ensor Museum in Louisville, KY. Warmly welcomed by Mr. Ensor, GIAT '06 was privileged to tour this collection of over 50 rare and classic cars which feature everything from a 1902 Oldsmobile to a 1964 Mustang convertible, and many more in between. An avid collector, Mr. Ensor told our very receptive audience how they do all the restoration work themselves on the many cars housed in his collection. A beautiful early model Lincoln was prominently displayed among his collection; Mr. Ensor noted it was his favorite automobile. From the look of it, it was east to see why. Reporter Harold Adams from the Louisville Courier-Journal was also on-hand to snap photos and write a nice story about our stop.

After a great visit at the Ensor Museum, we saddled up and drove back

across the Sherman Minton Bridge into Indiana. Heading for our last stop of the tour - Stumler's Restaurant in Starlight, IN - we enjoyed a beautiful, sunny, late-summer day casually motoring the rolling midwest Indiana hills. With old friendships strengthened and new ones created, the group partook of Stumler's fine cuisine. A hearty round of applause thanked our tireless hosts Leo and Phyllis Beavin & Jack & Pauline Spitznagel for all their hard work on another great GIAT, and long goodbyes were said. From all accounts, GIAT '06 was a great success and a good time was had by all.



Katie & Lauren Blakey proudly display Katie's '63 Lincoln Continental.



Robert Hein's '69 Plymouth convertible stands by as onlookers listen to Salem Speedway's Richard Deaton.



Bill Sloan checks out a 1919 Dodge Roaster owned by Richard & Linda Brown.



Bill & Jane Johnson's 1958 Nash Metropolitan draws some attention from another GIAT participant.