

GIAT 2009 Heads for High Ground

Grand Indiana Auto Tour 15 • August 5-8, 2009

By Jim & Kathy Farr. Photos courtesy Bill Johnson, Jane Johnson, and Ken Heavrin



The Grand Indiana Auto Tour chapter held its annual tour from August 5 – 8, 2009. 100 members with 48 cars drove through Vigo, Clay and Sullivan counties in the Terre Haute area.

Terre Haute is known as the crossroads of America. The National Road that passed through town was later named U.S. Highway 40 in 1926. With the east/west I70 the name seemed to fit even better.

We started at the Providence Center at Saint Mary of the Woods College. It included a tour of the beautiful grounds and buildings that were built as far back as 1840 by the Sisters of Providence order of the Catholic Church.

Our evenings were filled with music provided by members Bill Johnson and Harold Stout. They can really pick out some music! The next evening we had another group joining Bill for an even more memorable time.

GIAT participants viewed the personal collections of J.R. Turner and Don Smith. Mr. Turner has a collection of gas pumps and has recreated an antique gas station where many had a picture of their car taken. Mr. Smith's impressive collection filled five large buildings with Terre Haute and Indianapolis Speedway memorabilia. He also has a number of pace cars and sprint cars that ran on the famous Terre Haute Action Track.

We also visited the Police and Fire Museum and Hippodrome Theater. The Police and Fire Museum, a restored fire station complete with fire pole, houses some of the first fire trucks used in Terre Haute – including an Oldsmobile dating back to 1901. The Hippodrome was a vaudeville theater that once featured artists such as Al Jolsen, Valeska Suratt, Blossom Seeley and Ralph Bellamy. Terre Haute was known as one of the toughest audiences, so many performers would try out their acts there in order to be ready for other theaters.

We went to the Clabber Girl Museum where Clabber Girl Baking Powder is made. The museum outlines the history of Tony and Mary Hulman, Jr. and their impact on Terre Haute. The Hulmans started churches, donated land for a cemetery and supported local racing. They greatly helped area employment when they started the Clabber Girl Factory in downtown Terre Haute.

Top left: Ray & Anna Johnson's '60 Pontiac convertible rolls through the Indiana countryside. Top right: 1910 Oldsmobile fire engine. Top right below: Bob & Sarah Hein's '49 DeSoto proudly displays it's vintage license plate. Below: Sisters of Providence Henny-built '37 Packard hearse hood ornament.





1. Chapel exterior at St. Mary of the Woods. **2.** Harold & Ruthie Stout cruise in their '78 Ford Coupe. **3.** Alpacas graze at St. Mary of the Woods farm. **4.** Ascension mosaic in the St. Mary of the Woods college chapel. **5.** '50-era iron was well represented by Don & Sharon Loux's '52 Ford Victoris, Bill Slaon's '53 Chevrolet, and David & LouAnn Bowman's '64 Buick. **6.** Phil & Barb Schmidt display a nice GIAT collection from the rear window of their '64 Studebaker Avanti. **7.** Clabber Girl culinary Class teaches GIAT how to make better cookies. **8.** GIAT participants learn the fascinating history of Terre Haute's Hippodrome Theater.



The tour continued to Clay City's Pottery Factory for tours of how pots and other clay items are made.

Our closing luncheon was held at the Merom Bluff Park overlooking the Wabash River, which becomes the state line here between Indiana and Illinois.

Everyone had a good time and we can't wait until next year to be able to meet again. Each year we go to a different region of Indiana – next year will be in the New Castle area. If you wish to join us in 2010, see the details at www.grandindianaautotour.com.

1. “Don’t make me pull this car over, young man!” Actually, a great ride with Lynn & Carolyn Yager in their ‘35 Ford. **2.** 1916 Baby “Inter-State” race car on display at the Clabber Girl Museum. **3.** Exterior view of Lynn & Carolyn Yager’s ‘35 Ford taken at the J.R. Turner tour stop. **4.** Tom & Carol Whetsel’s ‘63 Chevrolet Corvair. **5.** GIAT views a small part of Don Smith’s massive collection of cars, race cars and memorabilia. **6.** Evening entertainment provided by (among others) Bill Johnson, David & Lou Ann Bowman. **7.** Bill & Jane Johnson pose next to the Wabash river/Illinois state line.