

# GIAT 2011 Heads South of the Border

(the South Michigan border, that is)

Photos courtesy of Bill and Jane Johnson



Mary Jo Siney "rings the bell for Shell" in her 1960 Ford Thunderbird.

## "If you build it we will come,"

was the response to MaryJo Siney's question about holding the 2012 Grand Indiana Auto Tour in Southern Michigan, and come we did! An historic first for GIAT—all activities took place outside the Indiana state border in and around Kalamazoo, Michigan. From Wednesday, August 3 through Saturday, August 6, a hearty band of Hoosiers invaded the Wolverine State with their classic cars and enjoyed the ins and outs of some of Michigan's finest, thanks to the great planning/execution by co-chairpersons Mike & MaryJo Siney and Jim & Cathy Dininger.



Above: Flowers @ Meijer Gardens in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Below: Lunch at The Gilmore Museum, Kalamazoo, Michigan, in their 50s-era diner.

### Wednesday, August 3, 2011

The Best Western Hospitality Inn of Kalamazoo, Michigan, was our home base throughout GIAT 2011 and also the location of our opening banquet. The evening's catered meal was top notch and, as usual, new and old participants had an opportunity to introduce themselves to the group. During the annual business meeting we were officially welcomed by the Kalamazoo Mayor's Office thanking us for coming and sharing our classic cars with the community. A fine beginning to our first out-of-state tour.





*Bill Sloan gets into the spirit of things entering the Kalamazoo Air Museum.  
Upper Right: Military aircraft on display in the Air Museum.  
Bottom Right: David & Toni Neuhaus' pristine 1927 Oldsmobile*



### Thursday, August 4, 2011

After a short five mile drive from the hotel we arrived at our first destination—the Kalamazoo Air Museum, which was voted “best place to spend a day with your family” and “best place to take out of towners” (us) by the *Kalamazoo Gazette* and, after seeing/experiencing things first hand, it is easy to see why. Not only did we enjoy superb tour hosts who walked us through the various displays while relaying real-life stories connected with the aircraft, we were not disappointed after asking them detailed questions about what we were shown and receiving knowledgeable answers. Other highlights included a 4-D theatre experience called Missions, their amusement park-style rides, and seeing the Lockheed SR-71B Blackbird. Our hats off to the staff at the Air Zoo and we thank them for a great morning.

Another “short country drive north of Kalamazoo” and we arrived at our luncheon/afternoon tour destination—the Gilmore Car Museum in Hickory Corners, Michigan. The meticulously maintained grounds sports an antique Shell Station and, more importantly (at least at lunch time), a 50s-era diner from which we enjoyed a great lunch. Once fed, GIATers could enjoy the awesome Gilmore collection which features over 200 classic cars, 528 hood ornaments, vintage travel trailers, and even a children’s antique pedal car collection. Two particular noteworthy automobiles were a 57’ Chevy

with incredibly low miles and one of the lowest mileage Deussenbergs in existence. I can attest to their immaculate condition having crawled underneath each to make a personal inspection against such claims. I was not disappointed.

Lest we forget the fairer sex, an optional Ladies Tea was hosted at the nearby Kellogg Mansion to round out the afternoon and end Wednesday’s official tour activities.

### Friday, August 5, 2011

The day dawned bright and beautiful and after a short drive we assembled at the Frederick Meijer Gardens in Grand Rapids, Michigan. A great facility, Meijer Gardens features 132 acres of displays including a carnivorous plant house, arid desert garden, seasonal display greenhouse, English perennial and bulb garden, Victorian garden, woodland shade garden, and an internationally renowned sculpture

collection. Hopping a tram, visitors are treated to a driver-narrated tour of the sculpture garden offering a fascinating insight into what motivated the artist and their work. Suffice it to say, Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park offered may a photo opportunity. After a fine morning of sight, sounds and smells (flowers) we were treated to a delicious lunch in the Meijer conference rooms.

Upon leaving we were introduced to what is famously known as a “Michigan left” which means turning right from the parking lot and doing a u-turn at the marked cross-median connectors farther down the road. I have to admit, even



*Russel & Marj Bees  
stunning 1958 Morgan.*



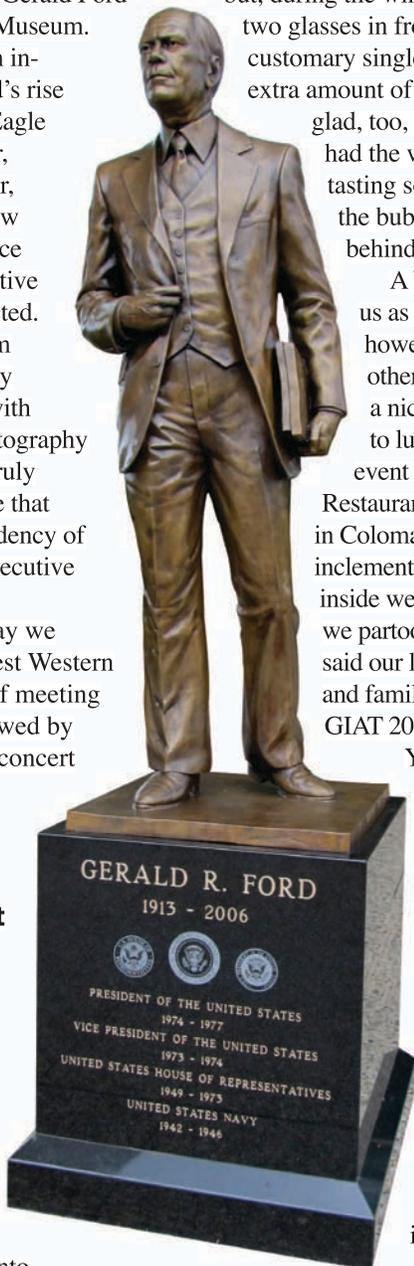
though I am familiar with this maneuver it still causes me to do a double take. Despite the unconventional method of making a left turn, GIAT safely made the five mile trip to our next destination: The Gerald Ford Presidential Library and Museum.

The museum offers an in-depth look at Gerald Ford's rise from a humble youth to Eagle Scout, star football player, World War II naval officer, U.S. congressman and how he became the nation's vice president and chief executive officer without being elected. Most notably, the museum brings the Ford presidency in the mid-1970s to life with artifacts, documents, photography and video displays. It is truly an educational experience that reflects the singular presidency of our nation's 38th chief executive Gerald R. Ford.

After another great day we assembled back at the Best Western Hospitality Inn for a brief meeting for next year's tour followed by the traditional bluegrass concert courtesy of our own musically talented GIAT members.

**Saturday, August 6, 2011**

The morning's first destination was the St. Julian Winery in Paw Paw, Michigan, the oldest and most awarded winery in the state. Founded in 1921, it is still family owned and operated. The friendly staff divided us into



two groups upon our arrival, treating half of us to a tour of the winery and the other half to a wine tasting. I am not sure if it was executive privilege or plain dumb luck but, during the wine tasting, the staff kept two glasses in front of me instead of the customary single, so I was treated to an extra amount of their fine wines. I am

glad, too, that our half of the group had the winery tour after the wine tasting so I could walk off a bit of the bubbly before getting back behind the wheel of my car :-).

A bit of sunshine greeted us as we exited the winery, however mother nature had other plans and met us with a nice downpour on the way to lunch and our final tour event held at The Waterfront Restaurant along Paw Paw Lake in Coloma, Michigan. Despite the inclement weather outside, spirits inside were bright and cheery as we partook of the fine food and said our long goodbyes to friends and family at the conclusion of GIAT 2011. A special THANK

YOU to hosts Mike and MaryJo Siney & Jim & Cathy Dinger for putting together another great tour.

Please mark your calendars for GIAT 2012 to be held in Lexington, Kentucky, August 1-4. Please contact tour hosts Bill and Jane Johnson for more information by calling 859-277-0327 or by e-mail whjco@insightbb.com.



*Above Left: Connoisseur extraordinaire, Bill Johnson, inspects the wine casks at St. Jullian's in Paw Paw, Michigan. Above Left Upper: The Gilmore Museum in Hickory Corners, Michigan, houses an exceptional collection of low mileage cars including this 1957 Chevrolet with less than 300 miles on the odometer. Above Lower: A rose among roses, Jane Johnson poses in front of Meijer Gardens.*

