

GRAND INDIANA AUTO TOUR 2015

Grand Indiana Auto Tour 21 • August 5-8, 2015

by Mary Richhart. Photos: Sally VanAtta

The Grand Indiana Auto Tour began its 21st tour on Wednesday, August 5, in Fort Wayne. Beautiful weather and clear skies greeted the 54 cars and 110 participants who traveled from Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio, Kentucky and many areas of Indiana. Everyone relaxed from their trip and enjoyed refreshments at the Best Western Luxbury Inn, the host hotel, where they picked up their packets for the four day event.

The Opening Banquet was held at the Landmark Conference and Reception Centre where personalized handcrafted wooden gas pumps from Bob Richhart's workshop were given to each family present. Welcome Certificates were presented to thirteen first-time GIAT families. Three people (Darrel Wilkinson, Tim Howell and Colette Ahrens) were celebrating their birthdays on this opening day and we all sang a joyful "Happy Birthday" to them.

President Randy Hughey opened the meeting with a warm welcome to everyone. Registrar Mary Richhart introduced the Tour Committee consisting of Jerry & Sonja Hook, Tom & Sharon Laupp, Bob & Sharon



Minnich, and Bob & Mary Richhart. Devotions were given by Tom Laupp and a hot buffet was enjoyed by all as we renewed acquaintances and met new friends.

Thursday morning, we traveled to the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo (where they were celebrating their 50 Year Anniversary). It is one of the nation's Top Ten Zoos for Kids and is wonderful for adults too. Reliving our childhood, we saw all the animals (giraffes, kangaroos, lions, zebras, tigers, bears, etc.) in their own environment. We enjoyed a Zoo Ride (train, carousel, boat or sky ride) and afterwards had a picnic lunch in the Zoo's new pavilion.

The next destination was just a few miles away to Brookside Mansion (formerly known as the Bass Mansion)

where docents shared the mansion's

Robert Richhart, of the host committee, hand crafted an official GIAT 2015 gas pump for each registered car/driver.



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3a



3b

1. Just Arriving – Richard & Janice Caloia's 1930 Ford Coupe with Don & Sally VanAtta's 1967 Chrysler Convertible in the foreground.

2. Gas Pumps ready for Banquet.

3a&b. Opening Banquet at Landmark.

4. Checking out Keith & Vickie Kruse's Red Model T.



4

history. Built in 1889, this home in Fort Wayne is now owned by the University of Saint Francis. It was the private residence and summer cottage of industrialist John Henry Bass from 1902 to 1944. This hand-carved sandstone Romanesque mansion is set on 65 acres with a man-made lake. It is stunning with its Mosaic floors, decorative paintings, murals, concave doors, and stained glass panels.

Then, it was on to the Peg Perego plant. They are the makers of battery-powered and pedal-driven vehicles for children. They also have a wide range of other products, such as infant car seats, strollers and high chairs. We had a great tour of their production lines, testing area and sales facility.

Last tour for Thursday was to Master Spas (the largest swim spa manufacturer in the world and one of the largest portable spa and hot tub manufacturers in the country). Michael Rees, Director of Manufacturing, gave an interesting in-depth tour of the process in making these beautiful spas. It was truly amazing watching everything come together. They ship spas from Fort Wayne all over the world.

Friday morning, beautiful scenery on winding country roads greeted us as we traveled to Decatur for a tour of Allied Recreation Group (makers of Fleetwood Motor Homes). We toured their production facility and saw everything, from beginning stages to the final product. Interesting too was how they paint those perfect, amazing designs on their motor homes. We also saw the inside of the completed motor homes which were magnificent with all their amenities – slide outs on both sides which provided enough space as a full-size living room, beautiful cabinetry, bathrooms, etc.

Lunch was a buffet at the famous Back 40 Junction in Decatur where we were provided with a huge selection of meats, vegetables, salads, breads and desserts. It was also a wonderful environment with Burma Shave signs, nostalgic antiques, etc. in the restaurant.

Afterwards, we ventured to a Sculpture Display in Decatur's downtown area where seventeen artists from six states created 25 beautiful exhibits. Some of the artists used



5. Darrel & Ramona Wilkinson's 1966 Mercury Convertible at the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo. **6.** Mike & Carolyn Kemp on Sky Ride at the Zoo. **7.** Bass Mansion with Herb & Amy Schneider's 1957 Green Chevrolet and Bill Steiner's 1955 Yellow Cadillac. **8.** Inside the Bass Mansion **9.** Parking at Master Spas Showroom.

cutlery in their creations. A stunning Bald Eagle with a wing span of 6'4" was one of them. The artist used over 150 knives, 100 spoons and 50 forks for each wing. Another exhibit using cutlery was a large turkey with all his magnificent feathers. Also in the downtown area was Yvonne's Antique Mall where many found unique treasures.

Our last tour of the day was to All-American Homes. From choosing the best materials to final completion, they make structurally sound homes in their plant. They offer a wide variety of styles--Cape Cod, Ranch, one story and two story homes. Made in sections to the buyer's specifications, they are completely wrapped and shipped to their destination where a contractor puts the finishing touches on them.

Evenings were spent with people gathering in the Hospitality Room to visit and enjoy refreshments. On Friday night, Bill Johnson and Dave and Lou Ann Bowman entertained the group with some good country music. Love that pickin' and grinnin'!!!

Saturday, we traveled to Auburn to tour NATMUS (National Automotive & Truck Museum of the United States). They are located in the former factory buildings of the Auburn Automobile Company and just behind the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Museum. NATMUS is unique as it has a huge display of pre-war and post-war cars and trucks and other memorabilia located throughout their buildings. Trucks exhibited range from 1907 to modern concept trucks. On display also are toy cars and farm equipment, model cars and trucks ranging in age from 1894 to present. They even have on display an old-time diner with mannequins.

Our farewell luncheon was in the NATMUS museum and catered by Dutch Heritage Catering. They provided a delicious buffet with down-home cooking and home-made pies.

We thank all those who came to GIAT 2015 and hope to see everyone again next year. Special thanks to Sally VanAtta for sharing her pictures with us.



10. Touring Master Spas **11.** Burma Shave sign at Back 40 Junction. **12.** Bald Eagle Sculpture at Decatur's Courthouse. **13.** Bob & Sharon Minnick's 1929 Model A Roadster. **14.** David & LouAnn Bowman's 1949 Buick Super. **15.** Starting the Tour at All-American Homes





16. Tim & Frieda Howell's 1930 Model A Tudor. **17.** All-American Homes Tour. **18.** Pickin' & Grinnin' in the Hospitality Room. **19.** Wayne Haggard admiring 1955 Ford Pickup at NATMUS. **20.** Toy Display at NATMUS. **21.** Model A's at NATMUS – Brian Pickering's 1931 Tudor, Roger & Linda Byers' 1931 Deluxe Roadster, Tom & Rozie Dapp's 1930 Tudor and Joe & Pam Baxter's 1928 Special Coupe.

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