

A FEW MORE HITS FOR THE OL' "BUCKET LIST"

By Scott Keeney

Ah Spring - where a couple's thoughts turn to -- hey!, let's do a Vette tour! In this regard, late last year, I signed us up for another Corvette event with Cindy and Dwayne Bublitz in Flagstaff. We had such a great experience with them last year that we wanted to join again as they had developed an entirely new itinerary for the first week in June. Although they fly under the banner of Bloomington Gold Tours, the planning and logistics are entirely theirs. They are just great people. No question or detail is too small to be personally handled both efficiently and courteously.

Dwayne's whole family (including his parents, brother and uncle) is very Corvette orientated. Among the collection is a Top Flight '66 Coupe, a 2007 LeMans Blue C6, a 2001 Red Z06, a 2007 Indy Pace Car, a 1993 40th Anniv. and a beautiful '60 Fuelie. Being long time residents of the Flagstaff region gives them tremendous insight for great scenic, dining and driving locations throughout the entire area. Things that we would certainly not think of.

So, on June 4th we were off. Out to Barstow and on to the Arizona State line. The first two "List" items were coming up. The first was to feed a burro a carrot in Oatman and the second was to try and navigate Sitgreaves Pass with a 6-speed. The first challenge was much, much easier than the second. The road is more a cart path than a highway! It was rebuilt in the early fifties which can only make one wonder the hardships endured by those who used the original Rt. 66 road during their treks to California during the Depression and Dust Bowl eras. Today, with traffic going 3 to 5 MPH through the hairpins, gave Cathy and I a sense of what was. Wow!

Down off the hill and a cruise into Kingman for a pit stop at the Power Plant. Back on Old Route 66 through Hackberry, Peach Springs and the mandatory stop at the Snow Cap in Seligman. We were in luck. John Delgadillo, the son of Juan Delgadillo, the original owner and Route 66 icon, happened to be working the counter that day. As a result, Cathy received the whole Snow Cap, Rt. 66 experience with the crazy straws and napkins along with the famous, fake mustard bottle. It was hilarious.

Milkshake in hand and back on the road. A brief cruise through Williams and onto the Little America Hotel in Flagstaff which was to be our base of operations. Cindy and Dwayne were there to greet us with a warm hello and a bunch of tour gifts. Polo shirts, V-necks, hats, visors, soft luggage, snack baskets and car care products were all included. They had handled all check-in arrangements so it was off to our room to get ready for a welcoming dinner at the Horsemen Lodge just north of town. Upon arrival we all got together for a group photograph and began introducing ourselves to the rest of the tour participants.

In all we had people and Corvettes from five states, including New York and Illinois. Dinner was excellent with many Corvette stories making the rounds. We were off to a great start!

Friday morning and we were off and running. We ran a caravan down to Sedona for the day. Dwayne and Cindy led us to a variety of scenic and interesting locations where we had a chance to stop and enjoy the beauty of the area. They had arranged lunch at the Enchantment Resort, just a gorgeous location, where we were joined by Todd Crutcher and Dan Dineson from the Bob Bondurant School of High Performance Driving. A great meal, more stories and we were on our way back to Upper Sedona. Cathy and I had decided to split off here and enjoy??? a Jeep Ride. Egads. So, with our intrepid guide "Taz" with his trusty six shooter and TWO Bowie knives, we were off to explore. I will say this - when they say Jeep Trail in Sedona they mean Jeep Trail. It really was a great outing.

Back to Upper Sedona and then back up Oak Creek Canyon to the hotel to try and wash the red dust off us and the car.

Saturday morning and the weather remained just beautiful. The caravan today would be to the South Rim of the Grand Canyon. A great drive up 180 to 64 through the high plains and the pine trees. Cindy and Dwayne had reserved tickets for our group at the IMAX Theater in Tusayan to see the movie "The Hidden Secrets of the Grand Canyon". If you have a chance this is a don't miss event. It was spectacular! While we watched this, Cindy and Dwayne drove up to Grand Canyon Village where they joined a Travel Channel film crew shooting a segment for an upcoming *Samantha Brown's Great Weekends* episode. After leaving the theater and entering the park, Cathy and I met up with them on the canyon rim road. We spent an amusing time driving back and forth for the cameras along with other members of our group. The segment is due to air in Season Three next year and we will see if we make it off the cutting room floor. Should be interesting.

The next stop was down Desert View Road to the east, and into the Desert View parking lot and Watchtower location. Again, this is a don't miss area if you have the chance. The Watchtower has its own story and the views of both the Canyon and the deserts to the east are something.

It was time to go. We put the Vettes on 64, down to the Cameron Trading Post, onto 89 and back to Little America for our farewell dinner. What a day!

The dinner was just delicious, again. Cindy and Dwayne presented us all with more mementos of the trip, including a framed 8 x 10 print of the group photograph from the first night. The guys from Bondurant raffled off a gift certificate for one of their classes and we all said thank you for the great time and experiences we shared.

Sunday morning, a quick, goodbye breakfast and we were back on Interstate 40. Cathy and I had decided to subtract some additional items from the Ol' "List". We headed east out of Flagstaff and ended up, yes, "standing on a corner in Winslow, Arizona" and was it a sight to see. They have the corner, the statue and some really neat graphics on the building right behind it. If you look close you will see an "Eagle" and "it's a girl my lord in a flatbed Ford" made to look like a reflection in the window. Very cool. (For Winslow).

Back on 40 westbound for a stop at Meteor Crater -- just because. It was then on to Kingman and then north on 93, over Hoover Dam and on to Vegas for a short stay at the Mandalay Bay. Home on Tuesday with again that mandatory stop at a specific Outlet Store in Barstow. It never ends.

We covered 1500 miles and once again had the time of our lives. More "Bucket List" items kicked the bucket and we will be looking forward to the next batch!!

Some travel tips of note:

Just one more time - If anyone is looking for a Corvette tour that is just plain fun and expertly handled from soup to nuts then a Bloomington Gold run with Cindy and Dwayne is your answer. They are involved with events around the country, not just the Arizona area so one might fit for your needs. We can't recommend them enough.

Cathy and I have never seen the level of law enforcement on the highways that is going on out there now. We lost count of the CHP officers writing 'em up from here to Barstow and beyond. The AAA has designated the entire state of Arizona as a no fly zone. There are static and mobile speed camera setups all over the place. They just strobe you and mail you the ticket. Even the trucks are slowing down. One of our tour members was written for only 10 over just outside of Rhyolite of all places. Nevada is in on it also. Revenues for cash strapped states. Words to the wise for any '09 Museum Caravan people, we wouldn't recommend trying 93 over Hoover dam with a 6-speed until they finish the new, arch bridge. It was a very hot, bumper to bumper backup for MILES!! Take care on that one.