

Old guys need to stay busy to keep from being bored. A few weeks ago, 7 old guys, one young one and one "in the middle," went on a 12 day, 2,700 mile tour in 8 Triumphs and actually came back safely and still friends. Our leader, Dave Smith, had a ¾" thick spiral-bound route guide for each of us showing every turn in the road and a daily itinerary practically down to the minute. A fantastic job! The caravan consisted of:

Fred Wagner – TR8	Doug Trapp – TR6	Dave & Tyler Smith – TR6	Steve Kirsis – TR6
Randy DeRuiter – TR4	Russ Seto – TR3A	John Reynolds – TR3A	Mike Hado – TR3B

Day 1. Everybody was smiling as we pulled into the parking lot of the Harris County Smokehouse in Tomball for a hearty breakfast before the long 1st day on the road. Russ was up until the wee hours the night before putting his car together so he was the last one to roll into the parking lot. It wasn't hard to see the smoke billowing out from under his bonnet so we cautiously approached, fearing the worst. He had only gone about 12 miles! As I said, it was a late night for him and he had completed his work but forgot to remove part of the plastic trouble light from the top of the engine. There it sat, on the manifold, completely melted. It was an easy fix and he got no ribbing from us at all. Sure.

We picked up Steve Kirsis in Montgomery, TX, and continued on. Two hours later, in Deep East Texas, Fred's TR8 decided to take a rest. After an hour or so, Russ diagnosed it as a bad fuel pump so off I went to a nearby AutoZone for a generic 12V fuel pump. A very nice country lady there assured me it would work fine. It did. Russ did a little creative wiring with alligator clips and off we went. Fred was happy. We were all happy. The bad news was that I broke three nails working on that Wedge V8 with the Holly 4-barrel carb. The good news was that Jim Wortsman, who couldn't make the trip at the last minute, won the pool for the first breakdown. He picked Fred. I couldn't resist texting Jim, and I think it made his day.

After a long 506 miles, we arrived in Vicksburg, MS, at 10:15 pm but unfortunately too late for wine time.

Day 2. Left Vicksburg and headed for the beautiful Natchez Trace Parkway. The speed limit of 45 mph was the only disappointment. Since we missed the official wine time the night before, Doug, Russ, & Dave insisted we make up for it at the first rest stop. We broke out the bottles and toasted our success so far. It was only a sip, of course, and we continued on.



We arrived in Huntsville, AL, at 6:30 PM and immediately found a niche in the hotel for the official wine time. 919 miles so far and all is well.

Day 3. Spent the morning at the U.S. Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville, AL, and got the grand tour. Amazing history and technology. Fred & I almost got a trip into space but the rocket left us behind. Headed to Chattanooga, TN, and arrived at 7:30 pm. (Continues next page).



1,035 miles so far, and all is well. Well, almost. I noticed that my feet were wet for the last several hours and the brake pedal was slippery and very mushy, almost to the floor. That was not good news. Fortunately, Randy had a master cylinder rebuild kit so the evening was spent under the bonnet of my car. Everything is fine and I can stop now, and it's a good thing because the mountains awaited us the next day. Also John's TR was sputtering and was traced to a bad plug wire and points. Good ol' Randy had a spare Pertronix and new plug wires so we made the conversion on the spot. John is good to go. Randy wasn't immune this trip, however; and the next hour was spent on replacing his points that had mysteriously fallen to pieces. I've never seen that before! (Ed. See Randy's "What's the Point" tech article in this **Bluebonnet**).

Day 4. Spent the morning at the Coker Tire Company in Chattanooga, TN. Great museum and car collection and custom shop where they make antique wire, steel, and even wooden wheels from scratch. They took some close-ups of Russ and John's wheels & tires since they were purchased from Coker. Maybe you'll see them in an ad. We already made their web site. Check it out at <http://blog.cokertire.com/>

After a stop to clear Russ' fuel filter, we arrived at the start of the "Tail of the Dragon," one of the highlights of the tour. It crosses Deals Gap on US129 at the Tennessee/North Carolina state line and is considered by many as one of the world's foremost motorcycling and sports car roads with 318 turns in 11 miles.

Unfortunately for us, it started to rain on our arrival, plus we got stuck behind a moving van! It's not a legal road for that kind of vehicle so it took quite a while for the police to escort the van through. Check out <http://tailofthedragon.com/dragon.html> and the second picture in the slide show will be a very familiar red car.



We arrived in Gatlinburg, TN, at 8:00 pm where I got a really crappy parking place as you can see. 1,300 miles and amazingly we're all still friends.

Day 5. Headed south through the beautiful Smoky Mountains of Tennessee, North Carolina, and Georgia, with a great pit stop at the Wolf Mountain Vineyards in Dahlonega, GA. Bring more wine! Tried to fix Fred's tail light but with no success. I told him it was because of his Holly 4-barrel carburetor. He believed me.



At 6:00 pm we finally arrived at the primary destination of Braselton, GA, just a stone's throw from the racetrack at Road Atlanta. 1,495 miles logged so far and all is still well.

Day 6. By now you are probably asking yourself, "What the heck is a Mitty?" The Mitty began in 1978 with a handful of Atlanta-area road racing enthusiasts who were looking for a safe place to exercise their cars at speed. Road Atlanta offered just the venue. The formula was an immediate success. After observing the enthusiasm for that first event, Martha Turner, then editor of the "Jaguar Marque," dubbed the proceedings the great *Walter Mitty Challenge* after the James Thurber short story. Originally published in 1939, "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" centers on a quiet man with vivid daydreams in which he is far more dashing than in his day-to-day life. In the 1947 film adaptation, Mitty—played by Danny Kaye—fantasizes about being a race car driver. Through the years, The Mitty has become a spring tradition in Atlanta. In 2004 Classic Motorsports magazine became the title sponsor and event co-promoter and Kumho Tires and Moss Motors became platinum partners. Mazda became a presenting sponsor in 2005.

We spent the day roaming the track, watching the races in many classes as they circled the 2.54 mile road course. During one of the breaks, we all got to do three laps of the course, but not at speed. Still it was fun laying back for a bit, then accelerating for short bursts around the curves. There were several vendors' booths so souvenir buying was a must, of course. It was a great day at the track today and we met a lot of nice, friendly people. Fred insisted that we document the activities and I felt I had to comply. (*Continues next page*).





Day 7. Today was the running of the featured Triumph race for the annual Kastner Cup. Kas Kastner himself was there to pick the winner. It's his selection alone and is based not only on the results of the race, but also on Kas' perception of the race preparation, general attitude, and enthusiasm of the driver.

This year's winner was #27 Randy Williams with a great looking and equally performing green TR3. What a great color/model combination! I couldn't have picked a better one myself.



Bob Tullius of the legendary Triumph Group 44 was also there to meet the attendees. Later that day, we were all allowed another spirited parade lap and here are Randy, Fred, John, Russ, and I on the same turn. As I recall, John, Russ and I had easily lapped the others in our TR3's and were coming up from behind. Randy was just being nice but it wasn't hard to catch up to the Holly 4-barrel V8 with the AutoZone fuel pump.



Day 8. Having cleaned all the bugs out of our teeth, and used up most of our wine the night before, we departed Atlanta the next morning. Not too far out, Russ signaled on the radio that he's in trouble. His brake pedal had gone almost to the floor. Another roadside pit stop was in order. This was an easy fix because we found that he didn't tighten up his new Toyota front caliper brake hose he had just installed the day before we left Houston. He was probably searching for his plastic trouble light at the time and got distracted. Once again, Doug was a big help holding down a nearby tree stump and we were soon on our way. *(Continues next page).*





After lunch we arrived at the Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum in Birmingham, AL. This is a combination racetrack and museum with over 700 motorcycles going back to 1885. Outstanding collection! The hotel wasn't far away and we checked in with 1,788 miles on the clock so far. More wine.

Day 9. Headed out of Birmingham en route to Pensacola, FL. After a nervous couple of hours, and a few closed roads unplanned by our fearless leader Dave, we used his creative navigating skills (and the Garmin, of course) to find a pit stop in Nowhereville, AL. This is a town with one building - a convenience store. That works well when you're desperate. Shortly afterward, down the road from Nowhereville, we found the Cotton Patch Café. It was tempting to try their \$19.95 hamburger (over 5 pounds) but the menu said "Please order 4 hours in advance." They were serious. Maybe next time, we said.



Hamburgers			
	Small	Medium	Large
Hamburger	\$3.25	\$3.80	\$19.95 *
<i>Our large is over 5 lbs. The bun is home made sour dough. You may purchase our large burger, 4 fries, 4 drinks for only \$29.95. Please order 4 hours in advance.</i>			
Double Meat	\$4.00	\$4.95	\$27.90 *
Cheeseburger	\$3.50	\$4.05	\$19.95 *
Mushroom Swiss	\$3.50	\$4.05	\$19.95 *
<small>add cheese .25 add bacon .50 add ham .75 add patty \$1.00</small>			

The hotel in Pensacola was in sight at 3:30 pm and that allowed us some extra time for wine before leaving for dinner. It was 2,076 miles down, with not too many more to go.

Day 10. Got up and left bright and early (that's 8:00 am for us geezers) to get to the Pensacola Naval Air Station and National Aviation Museum in time to watch the famous Blue Angels do their practice runs directly overhead. They are incredible and scared the bajeebees out of us when they came up from behind at a couple hundred feet directly overhead. It was an amazing tour through the museum and trip back in time. Our guide was a crusty former naval aviator who made it clear up front that he hated lawyers and engineers. Since we had several of those in our group, he had fun with that.



Our final stop on this last day of tourism was the Battleship Alabama in Mobile. What a great old iconic ship. One final wine toast occurred that night in Biloxi and we were ready to head home. 2,212 miles on the odometer so far.



Day 11. Randy missed Valerie so much that he decided to head home a day early, and I agreed to go with him in a mini-caravan because that's the kinda guy I am. After a long trek on I-10 and only one electrical breakdown (me), we arrived home around 5:00 pm with 2,678 miles on my unofficial odometer.

Day 12. The rest of the caravan stayed one more soggy night in Louisiana and took their time on back roads, arriving safely at home that evening. Of course, Doug had a couple more days than the rest of us driving down to South Texas.

Unofficial breakdown count: Hado – 3, Seto – 2, Reynolds – 1, DeRuiter – 1, Wagner – 1. All three TR6's – **ZERO!** I'll never hear the end of that. **Mike Hado**



Left: Our fearless leader Dave Smith with son Tyler, assistant fearless leader and chief navigator.



Triumph Tour 2012 – The Mitty April 22 – May 3, 2012

