

## Texas FOGs Triumph Tour 2016 – Southern Rockies

May 14 – 29, 2016

By

Dave Smith

For the past several years a few TTR members, who are also part of an informal Triumph enthusiast group called the FOGs (Funny Old Guys), organize an annual two week driving tour. Past tours have included drives to *The Roadster Factory* Summer Party (2009), *Sebring 12 Hour Race* and Key West, FL (2010) Washington D.C.

(2011), *The Mitty* at Road Atlanta race track (2012), the Rockies (2013), the Great Lakes (2014) and last year's drive was through much of New England (2015). This year the Texas FOGs headed to the Southern Rockies. Nine TTR members in seven Triumphs and one lesser car participated in the event. The event started with our traditional kickoff party at the Smith house on Friday evening (May 13<sup>th</sup>), where the road log books, official tour t-shirts, wine hour glasses, and mascots were distributed. Participants included:

Dave (FOG # 33) & Tyler Smith – 1971 TR6

Russ Seto (FOG #8) – 1959 TR3

Stan Seto (FOG #18) – 2004 VW

Doug Trapp (FOG #30) – 1974 TR6

Mike Hado (FOG #36) – 1965 TR4A

Randy DeRuiter (FOG #37) – 1967 TR4A

John Reynolds (FOG #39) – 1968 TR250

Karl Rettenmaier – 1974 TR6



Tour participants at kickoff party



The night before  
the tour start

The tour followed primarily secondary/scenic roads through West Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, western Colorado, back through New Mexico and a two-day return drive to Houston (see overview map below). The trip covered approximately 4,700 miles in 16 days (May 14 – 29). In addition to travelling on scenic roads, the trip itinerary always includes visiting an array of automotive related venues, various museums, military related venues and national parks/monuments. This year's drive included a good mix of all of the above:

#### **Scenic Roads:**

US 90 from Del Rio, TX to Carlsbad, NM  
 US 82 from Artesia, NM to Alamogordo, NM  
 US 60 from Socorro, NM to Springerville, AZ  
 US 180/US 191("Devil's Highway") from Springerville, AZ to  
 Safford, AZ  
 AZ 88 (Apache Trail)  
 AZ 64 (along south rim of Grand Canyon National Park)  
 UT 12 from Bryce Canyon, UT to Torrey, UT  
 CO 131/I-70 (Glenwood Canyon)/CO 133 from Steamboat  
 Springs, CO to Delta, CO US 550 (Million Dollar Highway)  
 from Montrose, CO to Durango, CO

#### **Automotive Venues:**

Franklin Auto Museum – Tucson, AZ  
 Barrett-Jackson Collector Showroom – Scottsdale, AZ  
 Brighton Motorsports Showroom – Scottsdale, AZ  
 Penske Racing Museum – Phoenix, AZ  
 Martin Auto Museum – Phoenix, AZ  
 Mo-Ma Manufacturing – Albuquerque, NM  
 Unser Racing Museum – Albuquerque, NM

#### **Military Venues:**

PIMA Air Museum & Airplane Boneyard – Tucson, AZ  
 Arizona Commemorative Air Force (CAF) Museum

#### **National Parks/Monuments:**

White Sands National Monument  
 Grand Canyon National Park  
 Bryce Canyon National Park  
 Dinosaur National Monument

#### **Other Highlights:**

Drive by Very Large Array (VLA) radio-telescope in the Plains of St. Augustine, NM

Wine hour, breakfast drive and breakfast with members of the *Desert Center TRA Club*

Visit and dinner with TTR members Bob & Eileen Grover in Steamboat Springs, CO

A ride up the Sandia Crest Tram in Albuquerque, NM



Highlights and select photos from each day of the tour are provided in the following paragraphs:

### **Day 1 (May 14): Houston, TX to Del Rio, TX ~381 Miles**

The official starting point for the tour was meeting for breakfast at the Cypress *Denny's*, which is a good thing for Karl Rettenmaier. While enroute to Denny's, Karl discovered that his alternator was not working on his TR6. He fortunately was able to secure a replacement at a nearby *Auto Zone* and made it to the restaurant only thirty minutes after the scheduled departure time. Had this happened after breakfast, he would have been awarded the not so coveted "**The First to Breakdown**" Award, which is referred to as "The Wagner". The name coming from the first recipient of the award, Fred Wagner, back in 2012 when he experienced fuel pump issues in his TR8 within the first two hours of the first day of the Mitty Tour! Our drive on the first day was primarily along US 90A to Del Rio, TX. Although a somewhat late

arrival to the hotel at 6:45 pm, we did manage to squeeze in an abbreviated wine hour prior to dinner.



Breakfast gathering on Day 1



Breakfast gathering



Pit stop along US 90A on Day 1



Pit stop in West Texas

## Day 2 (May 15): Del Rio, TX to Carlsbad, NM ~422 Mile

We decided on a slightly later departure time for the second day's drive to Carlsbad, NM. Driving a short distance to a nearby gas station to top-off with fuel for all the cars, Randy noted the TR4A was not running well. The diagnosis was a faulty spark plug wire, so we swapped out the distributor and wires with the spare set that Mike Hado carried. This repair causing a delay in the trip was deemed worthy of receiving the **"The First to Breakdown" Award**. There was some debate as to who the proper recipient should be since Randy was actually driving my TR4A. It was determined by the awards committee (consisting of me) that Randy would be the 2016 recipient of the coveted *Wagner Award*. Once underway again, we had a very enjoyable top-down drive along US 90A through several West Texas towns like Alpine, Marfa and Van Horn. In Van Horn the weather began looking a bit ominous, so tops went up and the rain

and hail came. We then continued north toward Carlsbad, NM. We took a short stop to capture a group photo in front of El Capitan Mountain. We arrived in Carlsbad around 6:00 pm, which gave ample time for wine hour, dinner and an evening glass of port back at the hotel.



Morning prep in hotel parking lot on Day 2



Scenic stop El Capitan



Stop for supplies



along the way to Carlsbad, NM

### Day 3 (May 16): Carlsbad, NM to Socorro, NM ~308 Miles

Early on Day 3, John Reynolds decided to find a muffler shop in Carlsbad to have them cut out his muffler. He felt the muffler was creating so much back pressure that it was causing the lack of power he noticed the previous day. Turns out that after getting the car up on a lift he discovered he had several kinks along his fuel line – the muffler was spared! Once assembled, we headed out for the drive north toward Artesia, NM, then west through the Lincoln National Forest toward Alamogordo, NM. In Alamogordo we headed south on US 70 to *White Sands National Monument*. After a short drive through the white sand dunes, we returned to Alamogordo and visited the *New Mexico Air & Space Museum*. We then continued north on US 70 to Carrizozo, NM and west on US 380 driving through the *Valley of Fires Recreation Area* (very recent basaltic lava flows) toward Socorro, NM.



Along US 82 heading to Alamogordo, NM White Sands National Monument



New Mexico Museum of Space History

### Day 4 (May 17): Socorro, NM to Safford, AZ ~318 Miles

The weather on the morning of Day 4 was a bit overcast and cool, so our drive across the Plains of San Augustine and the viewing of the VLA radio telescope was a top-up event. Driving along US 60 we passed through the towns of Magdalena, a relatively famous former gold/silver mining area of New Mexico, Datil, and Quemado. We encountered rain and some hail again along this stretch just prior to crossing the border into Arizona. We continued west on US 60 to the town of Springerville, AZ, where we fueled-up and then proceeded south on US 180/US 191 toward Alpine, AZ. This portion of our drive was quite enjoyable – very little traffic,

great winding and scenic road with some excellent scenic overlooks. We continued south on US 191 and passed through the famous open-pit copper mining area of Morenci, AZ. This is one of the largest open-pit mines in the United States and the trucks used to haul the copper ore to the milling facilities are quite impressive (see group photos standing by ore truck wheel). The next stop was at our scheduled hotel in Safford, AZ. While unloading the luggage from my TR6, I heard a threatening noise in the rear of the car. After some investigation by several members of the group, we determined that my right rear wheel bearing was giving up. Several possible scenarios were discussed, but in the end we decided that the bearing probably could hang-on for the remainder of the drive.



VLA Radio Telescopes in the Plains of San Augustine    Pit stop and carb tweaking

Scenic overview along US 180/US191 in Arizona



Scenic overlook to the Morenci copper mine in Arizona



Standing in front of the Morenci Copper Mine ore truck wheels

### **Day 5 (May 18): Safford, AZ to Tucson, AZ ~178 Miles**

Only a short drive from Safford, AZ to the Tucson area was planned for this day. The morning did not start well for Stan Seto. He had experienced fairly severe abdominal pains for the last two nights and decided he should visit a nearby emergency clinic to have it checked. So he and Russ stayed back in Safford while Stan went to the emergency clinic. The diagnosis was probable kidney stones and after filling a pain killer prescription they were on the way toward Tucson. Triumph guys are tough just like the cars we drive! Of course, Stan was driving a VW! On the drive to Tucson, we saw our first saguaro cacti. Once we arrived in the Tucson

area, Karl Rettenmaier took the lead, since he had attended graduate school at the University of Arizona in Tucson and now has a second home in a nearby suburb. Karl took us to a very nice deli for lunch and then a short distance to his house. We spent the afternoon doing minor tweaks on the cars and washing the cars. In the late afternoon we drove to the east side of Tucson to visit the *Franklin Auto Museum*. Travelling in part on dirt road to get to the museum, we were somewhat apprehensive about this venue. We were, however, pleasantly surprised once inside. The collection of Franklin cars and memorabilia and the discussions with our two very knowledgeable tour guides made for a very pleasant visit. Russ and Stan were also able to join us at the museum having taken the faster interstate route from Safford to Tucson. After the visit to the museum, we caravanned to our hotel for evening wine and dinner. Dinner that evening proved to be somewhat of a challenge for us. The selection of nearby restaurants was limited and after checking out the top two on the Yelp listing, we settled for what turned out to be basically a non-chain Mexican fast food restaurant with the food served on paper plates and plastic dinner ware. The fact is the food was actually pretty good despite the lack of atmosphere.



Saguaro cactus along the road to Tucson



Visit to Karl's Tucson home



Franklin Auto Museum,

Tucson

## Day 6 (May 19): Tucson, AZ to Tempe, AZ ~140 Miles

The itinerary for the day included a visit to the *Pima Air Museum and Airplane Boneyard* in Tucson. We decided to sign-up for a guided tram tour of the outside static displays at the museum, which proved to be a very informative and an efficient way to see the multitude of aircraft on display. There were also several buildings/hangars containing many more aircraft from WWI through to Cold War aircraft. We next took a tram tour of the *Airplane Boneyard* which is located on the grounds of Davis-Monthan Air Force Base. This is reportedly the world's largest aircraft boneyard. The current aircraft stored are essentially Vietnam/Cold War vintage military planes. There are a considerable variety of aircraft stored but more impressive are the numbers of aircraft stored, reportedly over 4000. After our tour of the museum, the boneyard and lunch at the museum grill we headed for Tempe, AZ.



B-17 Bomber at Pima Air Museum,



Outdoor static displays at Pima Air Museum



Group photo at entrance to Pima Air Museum

## Day 7 (May 20): Tempe, AZ

The itinerary for Day 7 was a fairly aggressive visit to several Phoenix area automotive attractions. We started by taking a very short drive north from our hotel to the Barrett-Jackson Collector Car Showroom. We met up with one of the sales rep's, who provided a great tour of the facility and the history of several of the cars on the showroom floor. One car for sale was a Yenko Camaro that was driven by actor Paul Walker in one of the early *Fast & Furious* movies. We next visited the Brighton Motorsports showroom, which was just a few miles away. This dealership specializes in sports cars sales and repairs. There were a few MGs, Jaguars, Austin Healy's and Morgan's for sale, or in the shop for repairs. The next venue was a short visit to the Penske Racing Museum in Phoenix. A relatively small museum, but with some very nice examples of Penske Indy 500 race cars. The final auto venue for the day was a tour of the very nice Martin Auto Museum. Similar to our experience at the Franklin Auto Museum in Tucson, we originally were not certain what to expect. The museum had a very nice collection of all kinds of vehicles from 1930's vintage to 1960's muscle cars. Prior to returning to the hotel, several of the group headed to the east side of Phoenix for a visit to the *Arizona Commemorative Air Force*

*Museum.* This museum now houses several of the former Confederate Air Force aircraft that were based in various Texas museums. Our wine hour at the hotel was made special by four members of the Desert Center TRA club joining us: Stu Lasswell, club president, and his wife Debbie and former TTR members George and Charisse Montgomery, who now reside in the Phoenix area. After a few glasses of wine, we all headed for a nearby, popular Irish Pub for an excellent dinner. Upon returning to the hotel, Randy and I went back out to purchase a power drill and bits in order to drill-out the holes on a replacement generator we intended to install on the TR4A he was driving. Working on a Triumph under a beautiful desert evening sky late at night, it just doesn't get much better!



Group photo at Barrett-Jackson Collector Car Showroom in Scottsdale, AZ



Barrett-Jackson Collector Car Showroom



Brighton Motorsports Showroom  
in Scottsdale, AZ



Penske Racing Museum in Phoenix, AZ

Martin Auto Museum  
in Phoenix, AZGroup photo at *Fast Eddie's Diner*, lunch stop Day 7 in Phoenix

## Day 8 (May 21): Tempe, AZ to Tusayan, AZ ~288 Miles

The plan for Day 8 was to meet up with some of the local TRA folks for an early morning drive up the *Apache Trail* (AZ 88) scenic road and have breakfast at the *Superstition Saloon and Restaurant* in Tortilla Flat, AZ. The drive was great, a bit bumpy on the first half, but improved as we climbed into the Superstition Mountains. The restaurant was very interesting with every wall covered with one dollar bills. After breakfast, Karl Rettenmaier headed back to his house in Tucson to leave his TR6 and fly back to Houston. We also bid farewell and thanked the four Desert Center TRA members for a great morning. After push starting my TR6, our drive north toward the Grand Canyon included travelling on some very scenic secondary roads through several historic Arizona towns such as Wickenburg, Prescott, the old mining town of Jerome, Sedona and Flagstaff. We didn't arrive to our hotel in Tusayan until shortly after 9:00 pm and needless to say, there was no wine hour!

Due to a limited selection of dinner venues that were still open and not overly crowded, we enjoyed a wonderful meal across the street at *MacDonald's*!



Morning rendezvous with local Phoenix TRA members      Scenic stop along  
*Apache Trail* morning drive



Gathering of Triumphs at *Superstition Saloon and Restaurant* in Tortilla Flats,  
AZ

## Day 9 (May 22): Tusayan, AZ to Bryce Canyon, UT ~341 Miles

We managed a reasonably early start for Day 9 knowing that we had planned a fairly aggressive itinerary with visits to the South Rim of the Grand Canyon, a drive and visit of Zion National Park and then onward to Bryce Canyon, UT. We visited three main scenic overlooks to the Grand Canyon and walked along the rim trail for a short distance. Needless to say, we were not alone in the park, but it was not overly

crowded and we did encounter a few English speaking tourists. We then took a very nice drive along US 64 and US 89 toward Page, AZ and Kanab, UT. It was late afternoon by the time we arrived at the turn point to head for Zion National Park, so as a result of the late evening arrival to the hotel the previous night, we decided to head directly to Bryce Canyon, UT. We arrived around 7:00 pm and gathered for an evening glass of wine and then back out in search of a dinner venue. The main resort restaurant looked interesting; but crowded with several tour groups. After checking a few other possibilities, most of the group ended up at a nearby diner.



Texas FOGs arrive at Grand Canyon



Scenic overlook to Grand Canyon



Along UT 12 highway toward Bryce Canyon, UT

## Day 10 (May 23): Bryce Canyon, UT to Price, UT ~274 Miles

Our morning started with a short drive to the entrance to Bryce Canyon National Park. We first stopped at the park Visitor Center and checked-out what scenic overlooks we wanted to visit. The first overlook was Sunset Point and a few of us hiked along the rim trail to Sunrise Point. We then drove to Inspiration Point and hiked up the trail to the overlook point. We also met up with some close friends of mine, who now live in Tennessee and were also visiting the park the same day. We then left the park and headed to Price, UT. The main scenic route to Price was on UT 12. It was an excellent Triumph road with curves and hills and fantastic scenery. We stopped along the route at several locations for photos. After arriving in Torrey, UT, we were advised by a local to take a different route into Price, which saved us approximately an hour in driving time. We arrived before 7:00 pm and managed to have wine hour before dinner. It was a long day, but very enjoyable.



Scenic overlook at Bryce Canyon National Park



Scenic overlook at Bryce Canyon National Park



Lunch stop at *Circle D* restaurant in Escalante, UT



Scenic overlook along route to Price, UT



Russ Seto taking in a scenic view along road to Price, UT

## **Day 11 (May 24): Price, UT to Steamboat Springs, CO ~279 Miles**

We were on the road before 8:00 am on Day 11, which should have given us a good start for the drive to Steamboat Springs; however, after fueling up across the street from the hotel three of the group headed off in the wrong direction! Fortunately, they were still in range of our handheld radios and we got them turned around and back on track. Our route from Price was north along US 191 to Duchesne, UT and then east along US 40 to Vernal, UT. Just east of Vernal we took a short side trip to visit *Dinosaur National Monument*. While visiting the main dinosaur quarry exhibit, we ran into a couple from the Kansas City Triumph Club. It was fun talking to them about our trip and also about the South Central VTR regional meet that was held in Kansas City a couple years ago. After leaving the park, we continued east on US 40 to Steamboat Springs, CO. We arrived at the hotel around 5:00 pm and left shortly afterwards to have our wine hour and dinner with TTR members Bob and Eileen Grover, who now reside in Steamboat Springs. They had invited a couple who also live in Steamboat Springs and own a TR3. With a new Triumph amongst us, our wine hour quickly turned into a “tech session”. Mike Hado and Russ Seto couldn’t resist checking out the TR3 and ended up performing a few tweaks that improved the running of the engine. We enjoyed a fantastic dinner which included Elk and Bison burgers. Bob also reviewed our next day’s route to Montrose, CO and suggested a better and quicker route. John Reynolds decided that he would leave the tour in the morning to start the long drive to his Michigan summer house.



Texas FOGs at *Dinosaur National Monument* in Jensen, UT



Wine hour and tech session at TTR members Bob and Eileen Grover's home in Steamboat Springs, CO

## Day 12 (May 25): Steamboat Springs, CO to Montrose, CO ~300 Miles

Departure time was planned for 8:30 am, however, my TR6 did not get the memo! After starting the engine, I could not engage the transmission. I discovered my clutch master cylinder had pretty much drained-out. I refilled the master cylinder and was hopeful that bleeding the clutch was not going to be necessary. I was wrong, as I found out a few miles down the road. At least it was a scenic area where I had to pullover and bleed the lines! The revised route that Bob recommended the night proved out to be outstanding. The route included a stretch of interstate driving along I-70 through Glenwood Canyon, which was well worth the effort of driving on an

interstate. The revised route was also quicker than the originally planned route and put us at the hotel in Montrose before 5:00 pm (first time on the trip we actually arrived in time for a proper wine hour)! We enjoyed the early arrival and sat outside by the hotel pool for our evening toast(s).



Photo stops along route to Montrose, CO

## Day 13 (May 26): Montrose, CO to Albuquerque, NM ~321 Miles

Facing a 300 mile plus driving day, we planned a pre-8:00 am departure from the hotel. The route for the drive to Albuquerque, NM was primarily along US 550, which is referred to as the “Million Dollar Highway” along the stretch from Ouray, Silverton and Durango, CO. The scenery along the way was spectacular. We did encounter some surprising weather as we approached Silverton, CO, where it began snowing! Fortunately, it did not accumulate on the road and we experienced no problems. We stopped in Silverton for a coffee break and was somewhat surprised by the lack of tourists. Perhaps this was due to the weather or our planning was so good that we arrived before the start of the summer vacation season. We also had a pleasant lunch stop in Durango before continuing south to Albuquerque. We arrived at the hotel around 6:00 pm and left shortly afterward to meetup with my brother-in-law and his friend for dinner.



Photo stops along US 550 (the “Million Dollar Highway”)



Snowing in Silverton, CO

## Day 14 (May 27): Albuquerque, NM

The itinerary for Day 14 was to first visit *Mo-Ma Manufacturing*, who specialize in sports car instrument restoration and repair. We met with the owner, Joey Labo, who provided a very informative tour of the facilities and explained the details of restoring the various gauges we rely on in our Triumphs. The process for refurbishing tachometer and speedometer faces was very interesting. Several of us were actually having some issues with either our tach's or speedometers and Joey said we could leave them with him and pick them back up in the afternoon! From Mo-Ma's, we drove a short distance over to the *Unser Racing Museum*. The museum contains many of the various sprint, hill climb and Indy race cars the Unser family

have used over the past several decades. In addition, there are several collector cars that the family has accumulated. It is common for one of the Unser's to periodically stop by the museum and greet the visitors, but most of the Unser family were in Indianapolis attending the celebrations for the 100<sup>th</sup> running of the race. We next headed to the east side of Albuquerque to the foothills of the Sandia Mountains, where we rode the *Sandia Peak Tram* to the crest (elevation 10,678 ft). We enjoyed a nice lunch on the crest overlooking the spectacular views of Albuquerque. After returning to the base of the tram, Mike Hado had a bit of a scare when he returned to his TR4A. He saw what looked like broken pieces of glass in the driver seat. First thoughts were, his car had been broken into. After more investigation he discovered that the air horn that was included in this year's goody bag had exploded due to the intense New Mexico sun and sent the gas cylinder flying through the plastic utility tray he had mounted by the glove box! The cylinder had to have hit and ricochet off his gear shift and landed in the passenger door map pocket! This somewhat humorous event could have resulted in a not so humorous event had Mike been driving when the cylinder launched! Mike also had a very humorous event involving a mysterious blue substance during our lunch on the crest. You will have to ask Mike for the details. After the visit to Sandia Mountain, we headed back to Mo-Ma's to pick-up our refurbished gauges.



A visit to *Mo-Ma Manufacturing* in Albuquerque, NM

Visit to *Unser Racing*

Inside exhibit at Unser Racing Museum

On-coming traffic on *Sandia Peak Tram*

## Day 15 (May 28): Albuquerque, NM to Snyder, TX ~414 Miles

Our two-day return to Houston started with a 7:45 am departure and a plan to drive along a short portion of old Highway US 66, which is Central Ave on the east side of Albuquerque. We also heard about a stretch of NM 333 (also old US 66) through Tijeras Canyon that if you drive at 45 mph you will hear *America the Beautiful* music. Most of us were not clear on how to initiate the music and so as a result only Mike Hado heard the music. He is having this condition looked into and is expected to have a full recovery! Actually, the trick to hear the music is to drive at 45 mph with the right wheels traveling over the pavement side strip, which results in the tire noise creating the music. After a short drive along I-40 we headed south on US 285

and then east on US 60 and arrived in Snyder, TX at around 7:00 pm. Being the last evening of the tour, we celebrated our final wine hour with a special bottle of wine provide to us by Fred Wagner (TTR club President).



Toast at final wine hour on Day 15

## **Day 16 (May 29): Snyder, TX to Houston, TX ~415 Miles**

The last leg of the tour is usually one of the toughest days, due to more than 400 miles to go, the typical warm late May weather in central and east Texas and the fact that our driving adventure was nearly over! We arrived safely back in the Houston area by late afternoon and began thinking about next year's tour! We had a very enjoyable wrap-up party at the Hado's, where the formal presentation of "The First to Breakdown" Award was presented to Randy DeRuiter!



Recipient of "First to Breakdown Award" Randy DeRuiter



Dave Smith being vindicated for taking the cheapest hotel room the prior night. Who needs a shower on a road trip?? Either that, or the Flomax just kicked in! Ed