

Twelve members of the Texas Triumph Register (five which are also Texas FOGs Members), in 10 Triumphs and one lesser car, took to the road in early May for a 15-day adventure travelling through the Carolinas and ten other states. This was the eleventh Triumph Tour that I have participated in since my first in 2009. Due to the tragic results of last year's planned tour to California, each of us were somewhat apprehensive of getting back in the saddle for this year's drive. However, getting the first day of the trip behind us, greatly reduced the apprehension and reminded us of the reason we have always enjoyed these drives in our Triumphs. All of our previous tours have been a combination of great driving roads, visits to interesting automotive and non-automotive venues and the numerous opportunities to share stories about our cars with other tour participants and the many people we cross paths with along the way each day. I am always amazed at how often people come up to us at our gas and pit stops (the number of pit stops seems to increase each year) and admire the cars and relate stories of their prior Triumph experiences. This year's participants (listed below) included two rookies, John Blum and Andreas Zimmer. Andreas joined the group on fairly short notice filling in for Texas FOG member, John Reynolds, who unfortunately had to cancel out due to a medical issue.

Dave Smith (FOG #33)	1971 TR6
Tyler Smith	
Stan Seto (FOG #18)	1962 TR3B
Doug Trapp (FOG #30)	1974 TR6
Mike Hado (FOG #36)	1965 TR4A
Karl Rettenmaier (FOG #50)	1974 TR6
John Barrett	2011 Miata MX-5
Bob Pennington	1965 TR4
Fred Wagner	1971 TR6
Franz Bachmann	1959 TR3
John Blum	1974 TR6
Andreas Zimmer	1973 TR6

A few changes to the tour routine were implanted this year including incorporating an extra day for final preparations following the "Kick-off Party". This year the party was held on Sunday evening, May 5th. Departure day was set for Tuesday morning, May 7th with a meet-up of the Houston members at the *Harris County Smokehouse* in Tomball for breakfast. In laying out the tour route, I attempted to limit the driving distance per day to be less than 350 miles, which I accomplished with the exception of Day 2 (361 miles). An addition that was incorporated to last year's drive involved the awarding of a second tour award. Since the 2012 Triumph Tour to the Mitty at Road Atlanta, a "First-To-Breakdown Award" (informally referred to as "The Wagner", in honor of the first recipient Fred Wagner) has been presented at the end of tour party. I noticed that after the winner of the award was determined, usually on the first or second day of the drive, there was a sense that a great burden had been lifted. Well, now that is a false sense of security since we now have the daily "Screaming Chicken Award"! On all of our previous tours we experienced many other minor and sometimes major issues with our cars with no recognition. Now, each evening at wine hour, I would award the "Screaming Chicken Award" (a rubber chicken) to whoever experienced a car issue during the day. There were a few days where we had no recorded incidents and the

rubber chicken usually stayed with the previous recipient. An overall tour "Screaming Chicken Award" was presented to the participant who experienced the most issues during the tour. The recipients of both awards for this year's tour will be revealed later in the article.



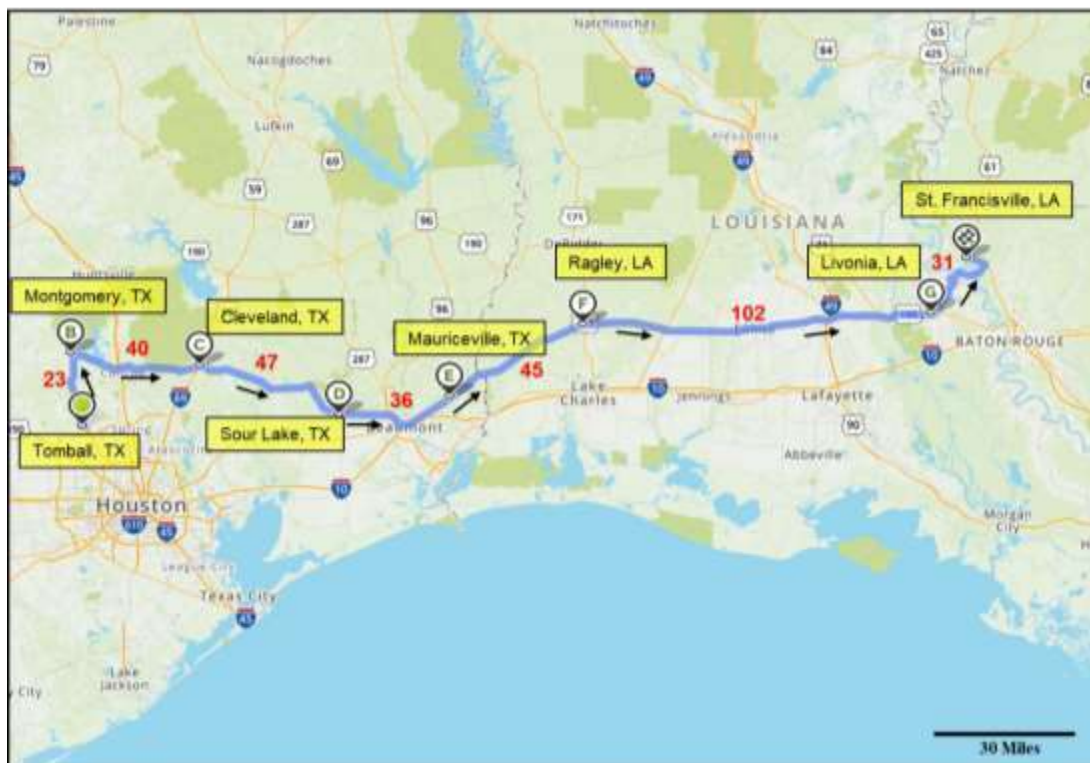
As in all of the previous drives we try to arrive to our evening hotel in time to conduct the traditional wine hour, which allows for unwinding from the day's drive and discuss the events of the day. With the shorter daily mileage this year we were able to hold wine hours on most evenings and also plan for a glass of port following dinner.

The route for the tour followed mostly the lesser roads with a few stretches of Interstate highway driving when necessary. The route included plan drives along the *Blue Ridge Parkway* and the *Natchez Trace*. Unfortunately, on the day we were to drive the Natchez Trace, I was following my *Garmin GPS*, which put us on a different route and we missed the planned access to the Trace. We did encounter several other very nice roads for great top-down driving. Speaking of top-down driving, we were very fortunate with the weather. The heavy rains that hit the Houston area shortly after our departure pretty much followed us as we headed east, but they never caught up with us. We encountered minor showers in Charleston, SC and throughout the Carolinas and Virginia. The total mileage for the drive was approximately 4,150 miles. An overview map of the drive is provided below. Each tour participant was provided a digital version of all the detailed road log maps for each day of the tour. Highlights of each day are briefly described in the following section along with a few select photos.



Day 1 - May 7, 2019: Houston, TX to St. Francisville, LA (324 miles)

Tour participants from the Houston area met at 7:00am at the Harris County Smokehouse in Tomball for breakfast before our scheduled departure at 8:00am. The group consisted of everyone except Stan Seto and Franz Bachmann, who planned to meet-up with us on the second night in Greenville, AL. The route for Day 1 is shown on the overview map below.



Overview map of Day 1 drive from Houston to St. Francisville, LA

No recordable issues occurred with the cars during the drive to St. Francisville, although Bob Pennington noticed that his valve cover was not tightly sealed and he had to add oil. Fred also was having problems with starting his car after gas and pit stops, likely due to vapor lock. We arrived to the hotel close to 5:00pm and had our first wine hour followed by a very nice seafood dinner at a nearby restaurant (*The Francisville*). Received a call from Stan Seto that his starter motor had failed and he would have to replace it before driving south from Cincinnati to meet-up with us. He would now join us on the Day 3 drive to Warner Robins, GA.



Departure breakfast at *Harris County Smokehouse*, Tomball, TX



The grid of Triumphs at meetup venue in Tomball, TX



Day 1 wine hour at hotel.



Evening dinner at *The Francisville*

Day 2 - May 8, 2019: St. Francisville, LA to Greenville, AL (361 miles)

With the threat of rain, we started Day 2 with tops up. During the morning drive we encountered a minor issue with Karl Rettenmaier's car, he discovered a loose wire connection to his starter. Although a minor issue, it did earn Karl the first "Screaming Chicken Award" that evening. We also encountered a road closure in the Richton, MS area due to a bridge being repaired. We were able to find an alternate route with the help of a friendly local resident who provided us with a good route to get us back on track. Stopped at *Big Daddy's Rockin Café* in Richton, MS for lunch. The remainder of the drive to Greenville, AL was uneventful. Franz Bachmann met us at the hotel in Greenville and during wine hour Karl Rettenmaier was presented with the tour's first "Screaming Chicken Award".



Overview map of Day 2 drive from St. Francisville, LA to Greenville, AL





Lunch at *Big Daddy's Rockin Café*, Richton, MS.



Locals stop by for a visit during gas stop.



And the award goes to Karl Rettenmaier!

Day 3 - May 9, 2019: Greenville, AL to Warner Robins, GA (250 miles)

Day 3 began with an approximate 8:00am departure from the hotel and drive toward Tuskegee, AL where we would meet-up with Stan Seto and visit the *Tuskegee Airman Historic Site*. After a tour of the museum and lunch in Tuskegee we headed for our evening stop in Warner Robins, GA. During the afternoon, John Barrett noticed a clanging noise in the right rear side of his Miata. He also noticed that the tire was low, so he decided to locate a tire shop. He discovered he had a six inch metal rod stuck in the tire that was hitting the suspension creating the clanging noise. The group

ended up getting split into several smaller groups with everyone eventually arriving to our hotel in Warner Robins by 6:00pm. We still managed to conduct an abbreviated wine hour and presentation of our second "Screaming Chicken Award" to John Barrett.



Overview map of Day 3 drive from Greenville, AL to Warner Robins, GA



Hangars and facilities at Tuskegee Airman Historic Site.



P-51 Mustang, one of the "Red Tails"





John Barrett trying to diagnose a problem with his tire



Evening wine and award presentation.

Day 4 - May 10, 2019: Warner Robins, GA to Columbia, SC (236 miles)

We had a little later start this morning since we were headed to the *Museum of Aviation* located just a couple miles from our hotel and it did not open until 9:00am. We spent two hours touring the multiple hangars comprising the museum. The museum contained many vintage and newer military aircraft. I particularly enjoyed the World War II hangar, which contained several classic fighter aircraft. After a long visit to the gift shop, we struck out for *Classic & Sports Car Parts* located in Columbia, SC. Once we arrived at the address, the shop was closed and possibly out of business. My pre-trip internet search indicated that this might be an interesting British car parts source. Some follow-up communication with the shop is warranted. Being only a short distance to our hotel, we arrived by 5:00pm. In addition to the disappointment in the car parts shop not being open, the arrival to the hotel brought some additional pain for Fred Wagner. Just as we were pulling into the hotel area, he was forced to slam on his brakes which resulted in his right front brake locking up. He and a few of the other tour members finally diagnosed the problem to be a failed brake hose. Fortunately, there was still time to order the required hoses from *Moss Motors* and requested they overnight the parts to our next hotel in Charleston, SC. The unfortunate part was that Fred would need to have the car towed to Charleston the next day and sadly Fred was once again the recipient of the "First-To-Breakdown Award" and received the evening's presentation of the "Screaming Chicken Award"!! Wow, so much fame in one day! Of course, let me remind the readers that the first "First-To-Breakdown Award" was awarded to Fred during the 2012 Tour to Road Atlanta when he encountered a failed fuel pump on his TR8 on the first day of the trip. His record time of under two hours into the drive still stands and the award is now commonly referred to as "The Wagner". Our wine hour that evening was made special by discovering that May 10th was John and Cindy Blum's fiftieth wedding anniversary! The celebration lasted long enough that everyone decided to have dinner at the hotel café followed by a few glasses of port.



Overview map of Day 4 drive from Warner Robins, GA to Columbia, SC



Triumphs at Museum of Aviation with B-1 bomber.



Triumph pilots at Museum of Aviation.





Look closely for the non-red Triumphs!



"Houston we have a problem"!

Day 5 - May 11, 2019: Columbia, SC to Charleston SC (136 miles)

Day 5 was to be a relatively easy drive day down to Charleston, SC. The morning started with Doug Trapp finding a flat tire just prior to departure. This should have been a fairly easy fix, just to put on the spare. With the help of the floor jack that Franz Bachmann carried in his TR3 trailer, the job was made even easier. Unfortunately, after completing the tire swap and reloading the car, Doug discovered that the tire would not turn. He eventually diagnosed the problem to be the wheel for his spare would not fit properly over the rear disc brakes he had installed. We either had to fix the flat or attempt to purchase a spacer or enough washers to generate the necessary clearance for the spare to work. Mike Hado volunteered to locate a spacer or the equivalent and Doug and Franz located a nearby tire shop that stated they could fix the tire in a reasonable time frame. The repaired tire won out and after approximately two hour delay we were ready to go. There was, however, another event going on in the front parking lot of the hotel. Fred's tow vehicle arrived around 9:00am and several of us watched as the "award" winning vehicle was loaded on the flatbed truck and headed off for Charleston with Fred just visible in the passenger seat of the truck! Once the rest of the group was finally ready, we headed off for Charleston with a planned stop at *Patriots Point* in Mt. Pleasant, SC and the home of the WW II aircraft carrier *USS Yorktown CV-10*. Arriving at our hotel in Charleston in the morning, Fred waited for his parts to be delivered and then took an Uber ride over to Patriots Point. The tour of the *Yorktown*, the other ships and exhibits that make up *Patriots Point* was very enjoyable and well worth the stop. We checked into the hotel around 4:30pm and several of us went to help/observe the brake repair on Fred's TR6. With the repairs complete and after a short clean-up we all headed for downtown Charleston for a great meal at *Hyman's Half Shell*. While waiting for our table, presentation of the "Screaming Chicken Award" to Doug Trapp was performed. All-in-all a very nice ending to a very eventful day.



Overview map of Day 5 drive from Columbia, SC to Charleston, SC





Doug prepares to install the spare on his TR6.



Spare installed, but not for long!



Meanwhile in the front parking lot, preparations are underway for towing Fred's TR6 to Charleston.





Winner 2019 "First-To-Breakdown Award"



Triumphs with *USS Yorktown CV-10* in background.



Patriots Point, Vietnam Experience exhibit.



Patriots Point, *USS Yorktown CV-10*



Hotel parking lot repair of Fred's front brake hoses.



Hyman's Half Shell, very popular restaurant.

"Screaming Chicken Award" recipient, Doug Trapp.

Day 6 - May 12, 2019: Charleston, SC

Day 6 was an open day in Charleston, where the group could visit the tourist sites in the Charleston area. Several of us headed for a ferry boat ride out to Ft. Sumter, where the first shots of the American Civil War were fired. It was a very interesting historic site and the hour spent walking around the old fort was quite enjoyable. Several others of the group walked around the historic district of downtown Charleston and later reported that it was very interesting to see the numerous restored historic buildings. For the group I was with, after our return from Ft. Sumter, we travelled back to the hotel and jumped in our Triumphs and headed for the Hunley Museum which was about a fifteen-minute drive from the hotel. The Hunley was a Confederate submarine that was the first submarine to actually sink a ship (USS Housatonic a Union Navy sloop, sunk on February 17, 1864). The second successful submarine was not until WW I. The museum was very informative and well organized. The submarine was discovered outside Charleston harbor back in the mid-1990s and subsequently raised in 2000. After the tour of the museum, we followed Mike Hado to visit one of his old Merchant Marine Academy shipmates, who is the current owner of Mike's very first Triumph a 1966 TR4A. It was a very nice visit followed by dinner at a nearby popular restaurant.



View looking down on a portion of Ft Sumter.



H.L. Hunley in preservation tank.





Tour group that visited the H.L. Hunley Museum with tour guide.





Dave & Tyler Smith and Stan Seto experience sitting inside a full-scale mock-up of the H.L. Hunley





Mike Hado unveils his first Triumph.



Could be another project!

Day 7 - May 13, 2019: Charleston, SC to Durham, NC (304 miles)

The drive from Charleston to Durham, NC included a drive along US-17 to Myrtle Beach, SC. While in Myrtle Beach, we visited the *Wheels of Yesteryear* car collection. The collection of cars was mostly 1960's and 1970's era muscle cars and auto memorabilia. It was a good stop before continuing our drive north to Durham. Other than John Barrett and Franz Bachmann managing to get separated from the main group prior to our lunch stop in Tabor City, NC, we had no car issues and the *Screaming Chicken* remained with Doug Trapp. We arrived at the hotel in Durham by 5:00pm and enjoyed a very pleasant wine hour. Karl Rettenmaier's oldest son, Owen (who attends graduate school at NC State), met us at the hotel and joined us for both wine hour and dinner at a nearby Italian restaurant.





Wheels of Yesteryear car museum in Myrtle Beach, SC



Nice collection of muscle cars!



Karl installing electronic ignition on Andreas' TR6



A nice Italian dinner

The second part to this article will summarize Days 8 thru 15 and cover the drives from Durham, NC to Norfolk, VA, Annapolis, MD, Lynchburg, VA, Asheville, NC, Chattanooga, TN, Oxford, MS, Alexandria, LA and our return to Houston. During this period, five more "Screaming Chicken Awards" will be awarded and the overall tour award winner determined! Several very interesting car related venues, a historic site and drives along some fantastic top-down driving roads are covered in the second part of the story.