

News from the Texas Triumph Register July 2024

Special Supplementary Edition

TRIUMPH TOUR 2024 - TEXAS

APRIL 3 - 13, 2024



2,000+ MILES IN VINTAGE CARS BY CLASSIC DRIVERS

Triumph Tour 2024 - Texas

Tour Participants & Cars



*Dave Smith & Tyler Smith
(1971 TR6)*

**Dave Smith & Tyler Smith
(1971 TR6)**



*Doug Robinson
(1974 TR6)*



*Karl Rettenmaier
(1967 TR4A)*



*Doug Trapp
(1974 TR6)*



*Fred Wagner
(1971 TR6)*



*Randy DeRuiter
(1970 TR6)*



*Mike Hado
(1962 TR3B)*



*Stan Seto
(1962 TR3B)*



*James Jones
(1973 TR6)*



*John Barrett
(1963 Sports 6)*



*John Reynolds
(1979 Spitfire 1500)*



*James Moore
(1976 TR6)*



*Bryan Roy & Neil McConnell
(1976 TR6)*

Triumph Tour 2024 - Texas

2024 FOG Tour - Texas

Introduction

A reporter is supposed to base his stories on: who, what, why, where and when. Our "where" started in 2023, after the FOG trip to the Midwest and the Great Lakes in May. By the third quarter of 2023, David Smith, our organizer and leader was asking "Where to in 2024" and destination suggestions flowed in. Dave put together several different maps showing in-state (Texas) and out of state routes to various places. He rough drafted time schedules and with most of the requesters wanting "not overly long travel days" narrowed choices to about 10 -12 days on the road and an aggregate of about 2000 miles. The trip to the *Big Bend National Park* in southwest Texas with side trips to Fort Davis and scenic drives along the three "Twisted Sisters" roads in the Texas Hill Country became the most appealing.

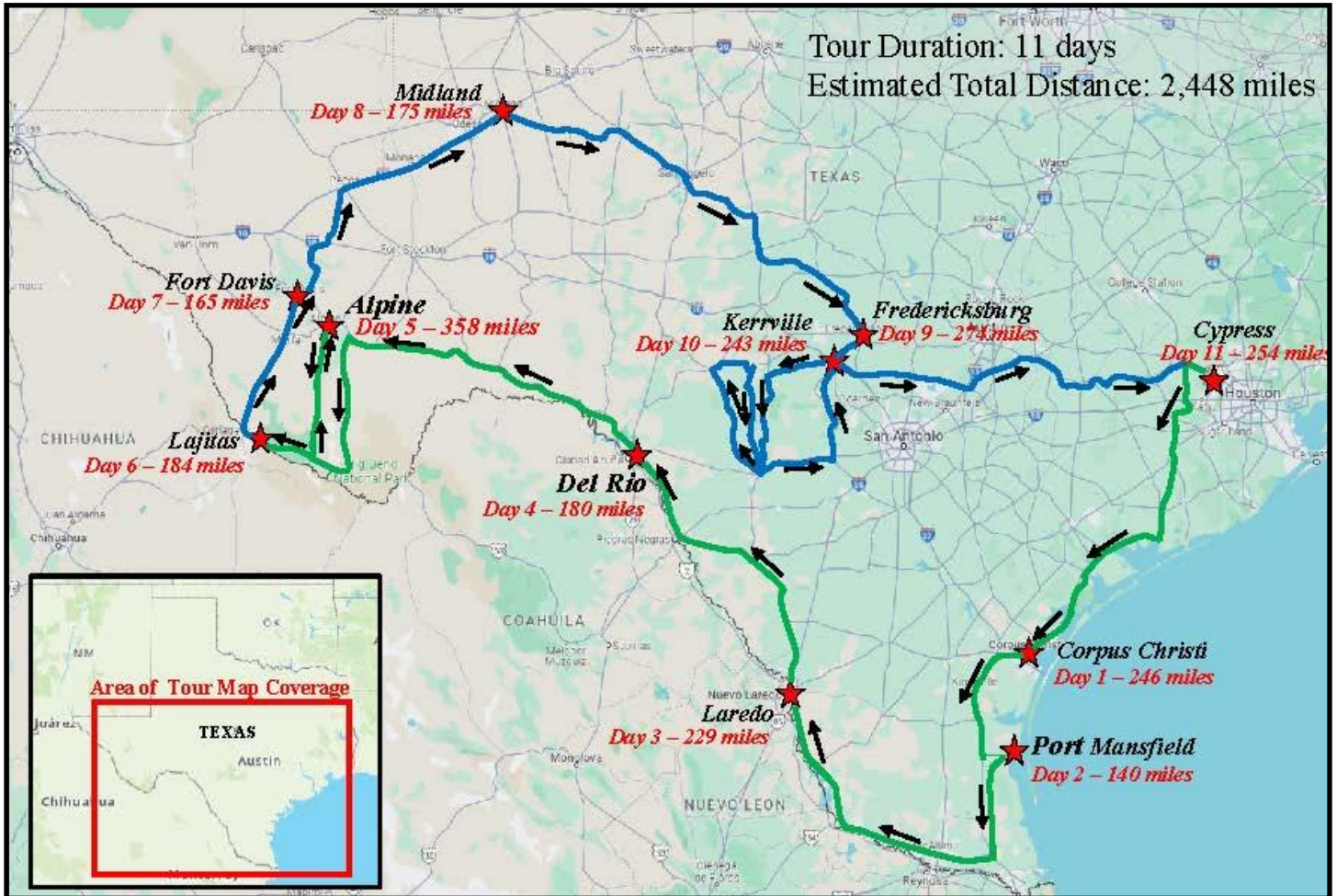
Our "what" then, was a trip through South Central Texas, and a destination goal of *Big Bend National Park* for two days, a return through Midland, TX., and a day driving on the "Twisted Sisters" roads in the Kerrville, Texas area.

Our "when" seemed to center around the April 8th solar eclipse, which was about when we'd be visiting Big Bend Park, which lies west of the eclipse centerline (we'd see about a 95% covering of the Sun by the Moon). Could we have gotten closer to the centerline of the eclipse path? Maybe, but the planned hotel reservation costs were eating us alive so not too many drive members complained, not to mention the efforts to get the reservations in the first place. So, our "when" was April 3 through 13. We were also hoping to see blossoming wildflowers, especially Bluebonnets.

Then, of course there was the "why". The Texas FOG's (Funny Old Guys, in past years, and recently amended to Friends of God, as we got older), like driving our Triumphs and not just for an afternoon. For the past two decades we have gathered, normally in early May, for a basically two-week sojourn to distant places relative to Houston. Destinations such as Boston and the Finger Lakes in the Northeast, Washington D.C. area in the East, Key West in the Southeast, the Great Lakes, and three trips west to the Rocky Mountains. Luckily TTR has Dave (and his son, Tyler) who just enjoys planning these trips, to include capturing the driving routes, selecting motels and hotels to stay in, recommending sights to see, museums to stop at, and other interesting attractions along the way, specifically including car venues (specific museums, eclectic savers of yesterday's machines including trucks, motorcycles, hearses, sports cars, and the vanishing sedans of yesteryear, that we remember, but not necessarily do our sons and daughters. The whole route we were to go on is shown in the overview map below.

With regards to the weather during the drive, each day typically had clouds in the morning and clear skies in the afternoon. We encountered only light showers on a couple days. It never got to a point where we worried about rain or not. Temperature wise, it was cool for about the first four days, warmer the next seven days, and only hot when we were in Big Bend.

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Tour Driving Route for 2024 FOG Trip



Pre-tour kickoff event with social hour, dinner, and custom cake

On the evening before the start of the drive, Dave hosted a tour meeting and kickoff party for the tour participants. He reviewed the route for each day of the tour, asking for any late suggestions of where to eat lunch, any problems with the hotel reservations, attractions we expect to visit, and the like. This review was followed by a social hour and dinner. He closes the evening admonishing the drivers to get a good night's sleep and to be at the breakfast restaurant early so we can get driving by 8:00 AM.

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The "who" for this year's drive was as follows:

- **Dave Smith (Fog #33)**, 1971 TR6, tour organizer and longtime FOG, and his son, Tyler.
- **Tyler Smith (Honorary Texas FOG)**, he's been on eleven of these trips so far, and anyone who will sit patiently in a loaded TR6, for days on end, deserves recognition.
- **Stan Seto (Fog #18)**, Loveland, Ohio, Member of TTR and Miami Valley Triumphs, 1962 TR3B, but for this trip driving a 2004 VW R32. He really wanted to bring the Triumph, but bit off more than he could chew in rebuilding /refurbishing worn out stuff on the '3. Wanted to drive the '3, drove the VW, returned home in a 2023 Honda Civic. A story for another time and place.
- **Doug Trapp (Fog #30)**, 1974 TR6, but soon traded for his Brown Ram pick-up truck, story anon.
- **Mike Hado (FOG #36)**, 1962 TR3B, and he went the distance with no problem.
- **Randy DeRuiter (FOG #37)**, 1970 TR6, another without problem.
- **John Reynolds (FOG #39)**, 1979 Spitfire, 1500, one solvable problem.
- **Karl Rettenmaier (FOG #50)**, 1967 TR4A, but traded off now and again, to drive the TR3 and a TR6.
- **John Barrett (FOG #52)**, 1963 Sports 6 sedan, one problem but had solution.
- **James Moore (FOG #56)**, 1976 TR6, but drove his Nissan 370 Z, White in color.
- **Bryan Roy (FOG #60)**, 1975 TR6, accompanied by brother-in-law Neil McConnell. One or two minor problems, to be solved at home.
- **Neil McConnell (Rookie)** from Scotland. Neil got to do a lot of driving.
- **James Jones (FOG #61)**, 1975 TR6, bought used last year, and continues to be "a work in progress."
- **Fred Wagner (FOG #53)** has a 1971 TR6 but was with us for only the first day and in an SUV.
- **Doug Robinson (Rookie)**, 1974 TR6, just with us for one day, but a very engaging fella'.

So, we had a pretty big group for this trip, 10 Triumphs, 3 lesser vehicles and 13 total participants. Throughout the drive, the tailenders were always catching up whenever we went through a town with stop-lights or a Border Patrol checkpoint. The narrative that follows summarizes the tour on a day-by-day basis.



Warning.....rubber chicken zone ahead

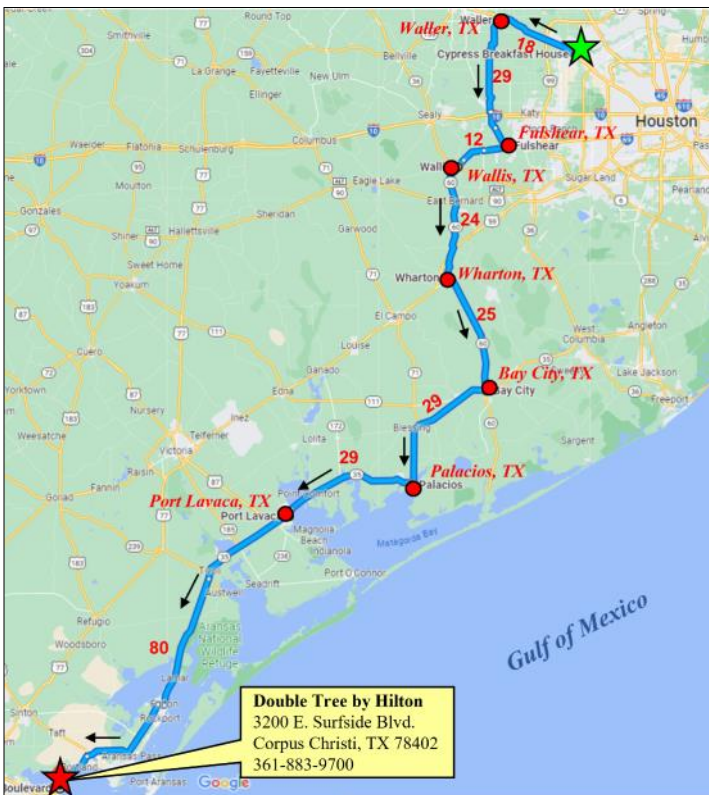
Triumph Tour 2024 - Texas

Day One: Drive from Cypress to Corpus Christi, 246 map miles. No stops.

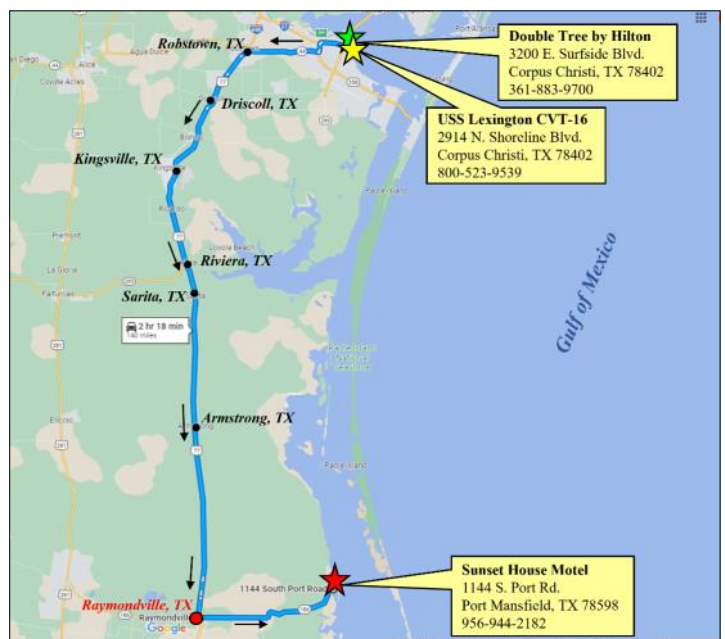
First day was a straight driving day, we used it to shake down the cars, discover any early problems, see who had working hand-held radios and basically just get out of town. Breakfast was at the *Cypress Breakfast House*, and that went well. In fact, the whole day went rather well from a car performance standpoint, no breakdowns (very unusual) or unnecessary stops on the road. We did overshoot one turn while heading for Bay City, but only cost us an additional ten miles of driving. Lunch was at a Mexican restaurant, which can be found readily in the state. We started the day's drive at close to 8:00 AM and were at the Double Tree Motel in Corpus Christi by about 3:30 PM. Following our first evening wine hour, dinner was at *Blackbeard's on the Beach* conveniently located across the parking lot from the hotel. The odometer reading indicated we'd driven 259 miles on the day.

Day Two: Corpus Christi to Port Mansfield, 140 map miles.

Up ahead of the sun, we drove the Triumphs 200 yards to the US Navy WW II aircraft carrier USS Lexington (CVT-16) for an on-board photo of the cars (and their drivers). The original plan was to shoot photos on the flight deck, but problems with the operation of the ship's aircraft elevator scuttled that idea. All the cars would fit on the elevator surface, so that's where we started. We needed to finish this photo opportunity before the museum opened for welcoming visitors. The cars were arranged in about 15 minutes and just as the sun was on the eastern horizon, we were still deep in shadows on the west side of the ship. With photos taken, Dave led the fleet of Triumphs off the elevator down the ramp. Near the end of the ramp, we stopped and repositioned the cars at an angle with the last car just over the brow of the ramp. More photos were taken, and in much better light. Then it was off the ship entirely, returned to the hotel for breakfast and then check-out. Following check-out from the hotel, we returned to the Lexington to tour the ship.



Day 1 - Road Map

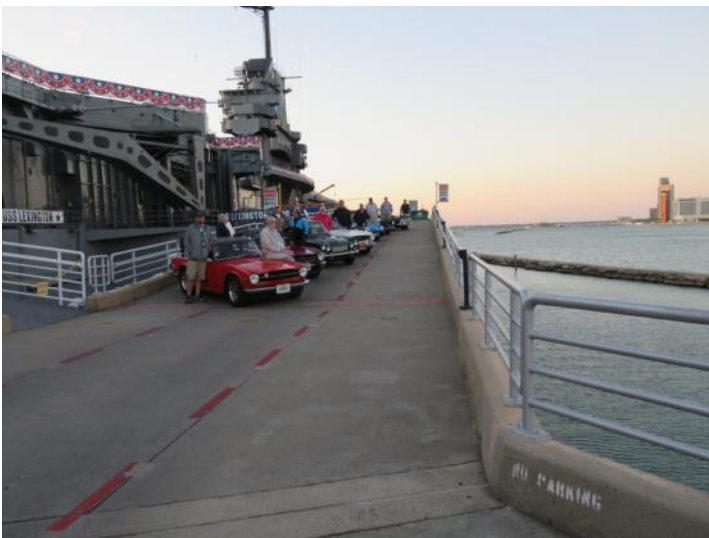


Day 2 - Road Map

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USS Lexington elevator, early in the morning



Later, on the approach ramp to the carrier

initially pulled up in front of a Mexican restaurant, but across the street was *RO's Southern Kitchen*. Most of the group voted to eat there. Turned out to be a great choice. The interior was starkly appointed, order at the counter, food and drink delivered to your table. One of the "Lunch Special's" was a half order of chicken fried steak and sides, for \$10.99. The author chose it along with fries and green beans. It was delicious!! The steak was a piece about 3 inches wide and a foot long, the crust was impervious to the gravy poured over it, so crunchy to the end. There were no complaints from any of the other orders, either. Restaurant is highly recommended if you ever visit Kingsville, TX. Back on the road, heading south on TX-77 to TX-186 and then thirty desolate miles east to the coast and Port Mansfield. We looked at the harbor area before going back to Doug's home and the *Sunset House Hotel*, a clap-



Doug Trapp's garage and TR6

After our visit to the Lexington, we worked our way out of Corpus Christi proper and eventually onto TX-77 heading south toward Port Mansfield, TX. You might ask why go to such an isolated location along the Gulf of Mexico? Basically, to pick-up Doug Trapp (Fog #30), who lives in a very nice recently completed barndominium.

While enroute toward Port Mansfield, we stopped in Kingsville, Texas for lunch (a little early, perhaps) and while cruising down King Avenue to the west, we

board constructed two story.

Doug and his wife, Lydia, were waiting with cold beer. Once with cold beverage in-hand, Doug and Lydia gave us a tour of their barndominium starting with their collection of vehicles including TR6, two TR7 converted to TR8s, a C7 Corvette and a Jeep. The living spaces in the barndominium are very nicely finished and decorated.

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The hotel, owned by a young couple, primarily serves the weekend fishing community. Key entry to the rooms (5 bucks if you lose it), which had a bed, air conditioning, fridge, shower, wash basin and linoleum floors. Rustic, but livable. Dinner was at the *Wind Jammer*, 100 yards down the road to the east. The menu was adequate, as was the food, most of us had fish of one sort or another. Breakfast was served in only one location, across the street from the hotel and about fifty feet to the west, *Sweet Gregory P's*. More on that shortly. Port Mansfield is some 35 miles from a freshwater supply. Potable water is delivered to the port via a pipeline to town. The hotel had a "Guest Kitchen" (open all the time) and guests were encouraged to get their drinking water from a

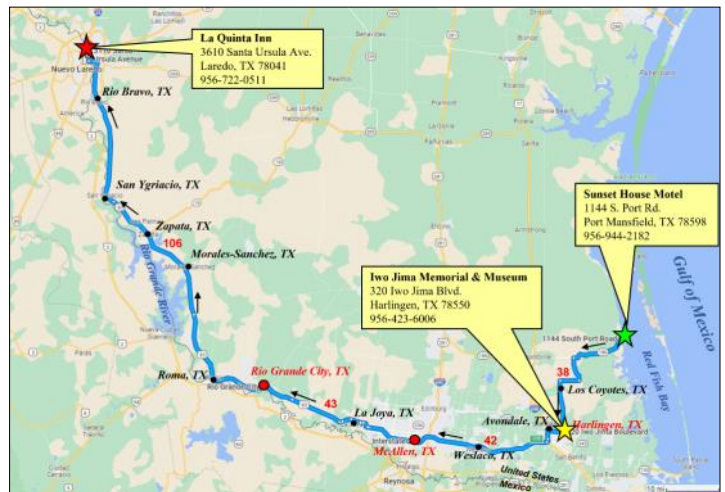
Day 3: Port Mansfield to Laredo - 229 miles, and one Attraction on the way.

First: breakfast! Up early and while walking over to the restaurant, met James Moore and Randy DeRuitter returning from their breakfast, encouraged that the restaurant was up and running, entered confidently. The dining area was just inside the door, about 20 ft. wide and maybe 40 or so feet long, ending at a short counter, behind which sat an older lady and a gentleman. To the right of where they sat was a short extension of the counter holding what appeared to be a camping stove. As I ordered scrambled eggs, bacon, toast, the man stood up and moved to the stove. Coffee was on a sideboard table behind me, and orange juice came in a Tropicana 8 oz. plastic bottle from the small refrigerator on a counter behind the lady. I found an eight-place table to sit at and very shortly thereafter, breakfast was served. More of the FOGs were coming in and as they ordered, the man continued to cook. Food flowed out from the small kitchen area, at a rapid rate. Some restaurants could learn a great deal about service by watching this cooking action. The regulars were also starting to appear, most surprised by the crowd already in the place on a weekday.



Sunset House Hotel at Port Mansfield

large filter unit inside by the door. Odometer mileage for the day was 144.



Day 3 - Road Map

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Breakfast was quick, hot and not expensive. A very satisfactory experience.

First Chicken - Forty-five minutes later, we were at our cars and ready to pull out. But wait, James Jones' TR6 didn't seem ready to go, as it was not starting. Looked like the first "chicken" of the drive was about to be awarded. A technical conference ensued around the TR6's open hood. Was the problem electrical or fuel based? After about 10 minutes of probing, the decision was made to change the coil. That was done, a start attempt was made, it was no good. A second coil was attached, as a check. The engine started. The second coil was installed. The car didn't start. "Try it again" Mike Hado said, after rechecking the fittings. Car started! The first "chicken" was awarded to Mr. Jones, and it was the blue one, as this incident was considered the "First-



**"First-to-Breakdown"
Screaming Chicken Award goes to James Jones**

to-Breakdown" (also informally known as the Wagner Award). Luckily it was not as serious as compared to the oil leak James suffered on last year's tour.

So, we got under way and within about an hour down the road, arrived at the U.S. Marine's *Iwo Jima Memorial and Museum*. The memorial is set on the edge of a large parade ground associated with the *Marine Military Academy* in Harlingen, TX. The museum was a small one-story building and completely dedicated

to this one marine battle. The Academy was a military college preparatory school for grades 7 to 12 with a class option for a post graduate year. Dorm sizes suggest an enrollment of about 200+. One might expect graduates to go to the Military Academies at West Point or Annapolis, or maybe Texas A&M.

Back on the road again, we worked our way through much road construction on I-2 W and upon approaching McAllen, TX, Doug Trapp came on the radio and said he was heading back home to trade the TR6 (which had a steering problem and was running rough) for his pick-up truck. Very shortly thereafter Bryan Roy also called in and said he and Neil McConnell were following Doug back because of an overdrive problem on his TR6. Sounded like back-to-back "Chickens" They would eventually catch up with us in Laredo our day's destination.

During our travels along the Texas-Mexico border, we passed through several Border Check Point Stations. Our convoy of little British cars was generally passed through quickly, but Neil, a resident of Scotland, had left his passport back in Houston and although he had his UK driver's license, at every stop there was a question about him being arrested! Luckily, he talked fast enough to avoid that. Doug in his truck and James Moore in his Nissan 370Z also got through OK. However, at the very first border check, the officer asked to see the author's driver's license, and seemed to put everything on it into his computer which delayed departure for about 5 minutes.

The group had a healthy lead by that time and it took about 10 miles to catch back up. Eventually in future border checkpoints, Dave started to pull-over until we had all passed through, before hitting the road again.

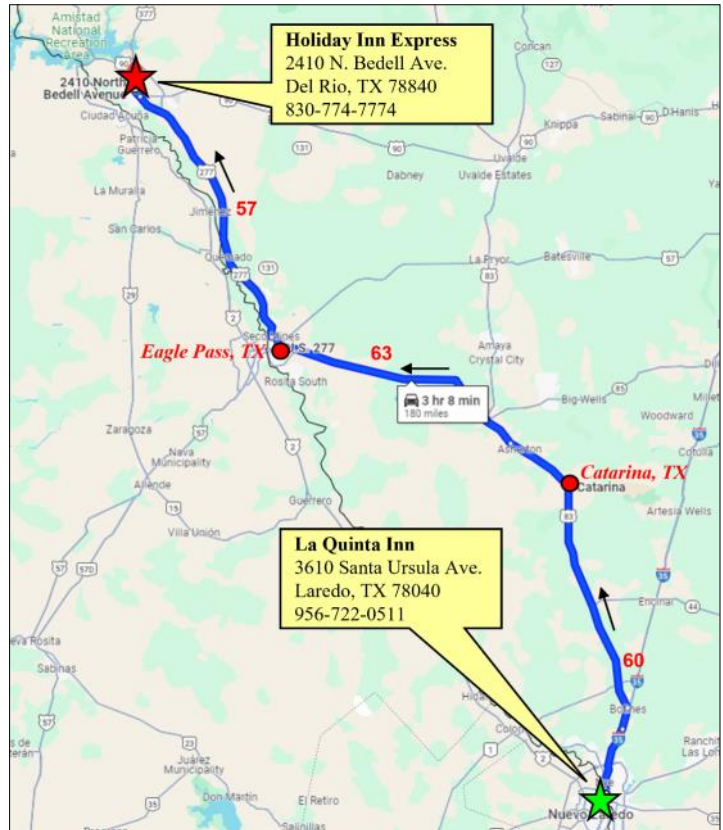
Driving west of McAllen, and near Rio Grande City, we could see sections of "The Wall" along the Rio Grande River. Interestingly, where there were gates in the wall, they were all open. Once we arrived in Rio

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Grande City, we stopped for lunch at the *Texas Café*, a mostly Tex-Mex menu. We then covered the last 100 miles to Laredo and ended up in the parking lot of the *Best Western Motel*, which turned out to be the wrong motel! So it was back to the street, go north two or three stop lights, to the *La Quinta-Laredo Motel*, the correct motel, with a drop of about \$60 in room cost.

Doug, Bryan and Neil rejoined us in Laredo arriving around 6:30 PM. Doug had his pick-up, and Bryan had put the '6 up on Doug's lift, completed a transmission oil quality check and found no problem. So, he disconnected the O/D unit and followed Doug to Lare-

do. Two "rubber chickens" were awarded during the evening wine hour prior to dinner at *Charlie's Corona Grill*, a nearby Mex-American restaurant. Odometer



Day 4 - Road Map

mileage was 189 miles for the day.

Day 4: Laredo to Del Rio, 180 map miles, No planned stops

Breakfast on Day 4 for most of the group was at a *Denny's* right next to the hotel. Then it was back to the cars and off north to Del Rio. Initially the route was north up I-35 to US-83 and then northwest along US-277, which took us to Eagle Pass, TX. We then followed the route northwest to Del Rio, TX. We arrived around Noon and pulled into a *Rudy's BBQ*, across the street from our hotel for lunch. We basically had the afternoon off and most everyone headed over to the nearby Wal Mart for supplies. With several nearby options for dinner venues, the



Doug Trapp gets second "Chicken Award" of the drive



Brian Roy awarded the third "Chicken" of the drive

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group went separate ways. Odometer reading was 188 miles.

seum is located. Upon arriving in Marathon, we stopped at the *Brick Vault BBQ & Brewery* for lunch.



After lunch we had the option to continue west for about 35 miles to our evening destination at the Alpine, TX *Hampton Inn* or head south on US-285 for 70 miles to Big Bend National Park. The group elected to split up with five cars heading to the park and six cars heading west directly to Alpine. The south-

Day 5 - Road Map, one of the long travel days



Day 5: Del Rio to Marathon and on to Alpine, map miles 358

The planned route distance from Del Rio to Marathon, TX was about 172 miles. The group made two stops before getting to Marathon. Approximately 25 miles north of Del Rio, we pulled up on the high bridge that crosses the Pecos River as it flows south to the Rio Grande River, joining just beyond our view from the bridge. The second stop was in the small town of Langtry, TX where the *Judge Roy Bean Mu-*

Pecos flows to Rio Grande way down there to middle left of photo



High Bridge across Pecos River

Group Picture at Bridge over Pecos River

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At Langtry Texas, sign points to....



...Mexico, which is the escarpment just across the brow of the hill in front of us



Judge Roy Bean Visitor Center in Langtry, TX.

ern force travelled to the *Panther Junction Visitor Center* inside the park and then proceeded on an easterly jaunt to the *Rio Grande Village* area to have a view of the river.

The southerly group arrived at the park entrance in about an hour, cost to enter was expensive but we all had *Senior Citizen National Park Passes*, which got us in free. Then there was the thirty miles to cover, before we got to *Panther Junction and the Visitor's Center*. It was a hot Sunday afternoon and the tourists abounded, but it was a quiet crowd and buses, motor homes, vans and trucks moved around the parking lot without a lot of commotion.

We were there long enough to satisfy people's hunger for Tee shirts/hats/refrigerator magnets and such, and then it was off south and east to see the *Rio Grande Overlook* and the possibility to get close to the river from one of the nearby camping grounds. The overlook was a bust as the river was hidden, again, by the vegetation. We drove down closer to the river and parked on the edge of a campground and then walked toward the river, asking for directions on the way. At one point, the trail bent south, and the younger members of the group took it while us older people just found shade and sat down.

After about a half hour, the young showed back up and said they'd seen and had taken pictures of the *Rio Grande*, so we retreated to the cars and started the long journey west to *Alpine*. The drive would be along a combination of park roads and a northerly trek along *TX-118*. We arrived at our *Alpine, TX* hotel as the sun was setting on the western horizon.

It had been a good day with the odometer reading for this day at 387 miles, the longest drive of the tour.

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ment, maybe 500 ft. or more tall.

From the river level, we drove to a scenic overlook, for more pictures. It was getting on to "Solar Eclipse" time, so our next destination was 15-18 miles back up on the scenic drive to "Mule Ears" scenic overlook, where with about 50 or so other people we watched the moon block the sun for up to 95% complete and for about 4 minutes. It hardly got dark



Day 6 - Road Map



Near Santa Elena Canyon, the Rio Grande pools and flows away as a small creek

Day 6: Alpine to Lajitas, map miles 184, also Eclipse Day and a day in the Park

We have reached the goal of the trip, and today we have much to see in the National Park and in the sky! So, after breakfast, it was back onto TX-118, south to Study Butte-Terlingua, and then east into the park and a right turn onto the Ross-Maxwell Scenic Drive which heads down to the Rio Grande River and the Santa Elena Canyon. Here at the river's edge, you are standing in America and the Rio Grande River is only a creek size stream, easily crossed in two steps.

Intrepid Mike Hado was the first, one minute in America, the next in Mexico, arms raised in "salute". He was quickly followed by other FOG's, and eventually they all were repatriated back into America. Facing Santa Elena Canyon, everything to the left and down to the water's edge was Mexico. No "Wall", because on the Mexico side was a vertical escarp-



So, naturally Mike Hado crosses the Border

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Without even getting his shoes wet at all, as there is a lot of light hitting the earth even



Only identified Bluebonnet bush



Others get ready to follow him



Back on US soil in front of the Santa Elena Canyon



There they are.... How, now, to get them back???



Mexico) - Rio Grande flowing out of the Canyon, No Wall Needed - (USA)

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The Santa Elena Canyon from scenic overlook parking lot



At 95% sun occlusion, it did get darker, but 5% sunlight is still a lot!

at 5% sun illumination. Also, above our vantage point, the skies were cloud free almost to the horizon for almost 360 degrees - a great location to observe the occlusion.



The "Mule Ears" from scenic overlook parking lot

With the eclipse viewing concluded it was time for lunch; so we returned to the scenic road and continued north to the junction with Gano Springs Road. We then headed east a short distance to Basin Junction Rd. and then south into the Chisos Basin. Once inside the basin we followed the signs to the lodge and restaurant. As we walked up the parking lot to the restaurant, we crossed paths with a Road-runner, probably also looking for something to eat.



Waiting for the eclipse in the Mule Ears Scenic Overlook parking lot

Lunch over, we eventually regrouped and drove over to the Panther Junction Visitors Center one last time (need any refrigerator magnets?). then it was goodbye to the National Park and back out the way we came to Study Butte for gas, then cross over to FM-170 leading to the *Lajitas Golf Resort* for the night's layover. You could tell the hotel was old, 1910 old, no elevator, but offers to lug our bags up the stairs, hallways were hot, but rooms were cool, and reasonably clean. Key locks and the promise of a 5

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Dinner on the patio at Lajitas Golf Course hotel. Were we seated out there, because no collars on our shirts?

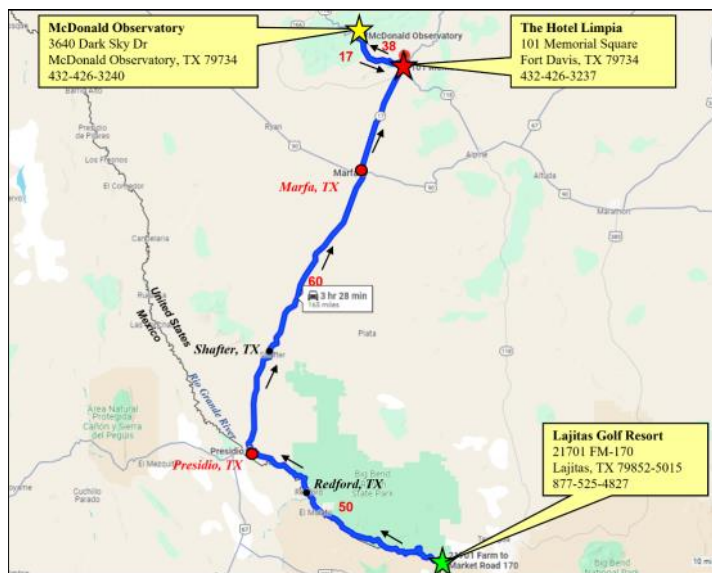
dollar fine if you lose it. Lobby and sitting room appointments suggested the late 1940's, so they've done some renovation.

There was time for the traditional end of the day evening wine hour, but we had to do it in the bar with beer, and reservations were made at the in-house restaurant for later. We are a big group and were seated out on the sun-side of the outdoor patio. Getting served seemed like forever, but the food came eventually, and our waitress was trying to keep us calm, by making jokes and asking (like "Knock-knock" jokes) questions. For this crowd, they were not raunchy enough. I think she still was well compensated. This far from civilization, the night skies were a blaze of starry glory, constellations and the Milky Way were very easy to identify, (been a while since such a star bright sky has been seen). Odometer reading was 197 miles.

Day 7: Lajitas to Fort Davis, map miles 165, one planned stop.

Up at 6:00 AM down to the restaurant at about 6:50 AM having passed up the small bakery (out in front of the complex the restaurant was in.) Door was open, young man still putting chairs down from tables and putting down place settings. He said, "We're not open yet, sit anywhere". Then he came over. "I can get you coffee, but they are still setting up the kitchen". I ordered. Coffee came, as did Mike Hado, who looked around and headed back out to the bakery. My order was sitting in front of me about 10 minutes later, more FOG's came in and a couple left, but most stayed. Mike later told me, the bakery shop had full service. Surprisingly, no golfers were seen, so I guess there were no early tee-times during the week.

Breakfast done; cars were repacked for the day's adventure. The drive to Fort Davis was short, 110 miles. We were also going slightly beyond (55 miles



Day 7 - Road Map to Fort Davis

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roundtrip) to the McDonald Observatory in the Davis Mountains. What could possibly go wrong?

Our convoy left Lajitas on FM-170, driving between the Rio Grande River and the Big Bend Ranch property up to Presidio, TX, where we turned north on US-67 toward Fort Davis. The lunch stop was in Marfa TX, at the *Saint George Restaurant*. After, we walked a little and ended up at the *El Piasano Hotel* on West Texas Street. This hotel was reminiscent of the late 19th Century RR hotels that dot the



Group photo in hotel courtyard

Southwest, but unusual in construction as one of the first buildings in the West built with poured concrete. The lobby and adjacent sitting room walls were covered with Western art and animal heads.

It was early afternoon as we hit the highway again, leaving on TX-17, clear of the town and about a mile or so out in the country, John Barrett's Sports 6 suddenly blew two loud puffs of smoke and the engine quit running. He drifted to the side of the road as we closed in behind him and those in front pulled off the road. Hood up we gathered around to look for any further damage, everything looked OK, but the engine would turn over but not start. After a couple of minutes and after several 18-wheelers had blasted past, it was decided we needed to move John's car to a safer location to work on it. The front runners had pulled into a small turn-off about 100 yds. away. John was parked on the downhill side of a gently sloped hill, the brow of which was just behind him. John got in, and three of us started to push him. Even downhill, pushing was strenuous, but we got him there, then had to walk back to bring our own cars down.

Back under the hood dove the working mechanics (Mike, Randy and Bryan) of the group. It took awhile to determine that John's electronic ignition system (in the distributor) had finally worn out. John, how-



Lobby of the El Piasano Hotel



A reading room, beyond the lobby

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ever, was carrying a new unit and after it was installed the car started and ran fine. The tour's fourth "Chicken" would be awarded that evening. During this stop, we were between the highway on one side and a cattle ranch on the other side and the cattle were coming by us at trot, heading for food, was our guess, but also stirring up lots of fine dust



Pushing John Barrett's Sports 6 on TX-17



John Barrett gets his "Chicken" passed on from Bryan, cattle look on in interest

that blew over us, causing runny eyes, noses and dry throats. We were happy to get the problem solved and back on the road.

As we came into Fort Davis, Dave took a left turn onto TX-118, and headed for the McDonald Observa-

tories in the Davis Mountains. Up we climbed to about 6500 feet above sea level and the visitor center, where fees were paid to allow us to go up to the open observatories. One thing to note, these facilities are tied to the University of Texas, which has priority on their use and availability to the public. From the visitor center, we drove further up to the telescope building, it became cloudy, very windy and made for a very cold afternoon walk. The first observatory was closed. It was about a 100-yard down slope walk to the second building, which our only access was to a small ante room wallpapered with space



McDonald Observatories in the Davis Mountains

(orbital scenes), but the telescopes were in use and not available to look at. We left vaguely disappointed.

Back down out of the mountains we drove to the *Limpia Hotel* in downtown Fort Davis. Rooms were in the main building (where we registered), and in an annex across the street above a store. Dinner was in the *Blue Mountain Bar and Grill*, right next to the hotel. Earlier, in the hotel lounge, we had our wine hour a proposal was announced to make Tyler Smith an "Honorary Texas FOG" due to his steadfast travel on about eleven of these yearly adventures. The vote was unanimous. Also, this was where John Barrett officially received his "chicken" for the after-lunch

Triumph Tour 2024 - Texas



Tyler awarded "Official" Texas FOG title, he needs an unofficial FOG Tee Shirt



John Barrett's official "Chicken" Award

unplanned travel stop. Odometer reading for Day #7 was 163 miles.

Day 8: Fort Davis to Midland, map miles 175, two Stops on the way.

Breakfast and gas were problematic in Fort Davis. With one gas station open in town and only two pumps, most of us went very early. Breakfast was to be at a coffee shop next to the restaurant, normally opened at 7 AM, had pushed their opening back an hour, just for that morning. Frustrated, the early birds looked elsewhere and finally *Stone Village Market* was found that offered breakfast burritos and coffee, etc. so that's where we all alighted to



Day 8 - Road Map

eat. The planned stops were at the *Sandhills State Park* in Monahans, TX and the *Permian Basin Petroleum Museum* in Midland, TX.

Departing from the *Stone Village Market* store, we headed north on TX-17 toward Pecos, TX. We then hopped onto a very busy I-20 E for a 40-mile run up to Monahans. Once in Monahans, we exited I-20 and followed the signs to *Monahans Sandhills State Park*.

Up to the visitor's center we walked, paid the entry fee and got a window sticker to show we had paid,

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got maps of the Park's road system, browsed the Park's books and knick knacks spread all over the admissions area. Then it was back into the cars and drive out through the sand dunes to the furthest park "turn-around". It was a Cul-de-Sac containing a picnic area, parking and 20- to 30-foot-high light brown sand dunes on all four sides. Everyone climbed the dunes, well, almost everyone. From the top of the dunes, it was kind of like *White Sands* in New



Parked out in the Sand Hills

Mexico, with a little wind but not as hot. The dunes stretched away in all directions. Many photos were taken.



FOGs that conquered the dunes

Time to go, retrace our steps to the visitor's center, cross the tracks and frontage road and back onto I-20 with only fifty odd miles up to Midland. Lunch was at a *Whataburger* in Midland and followed with some consternation as Dave found out that several FOG's had not followed procedure for registering credit cards at the Hampton Inn in Midland for tonight's stay. Cell phones in action, several cards were confirmed as OK, and for those who had missed out on rooms, space was found at a nearby hotel only about 100 yards away. Two of our party were already booked into another nearby hotel, the Towneplace Suites.

Once the hotel situation was resolved, we drove the short distance to the *Permian Basin Petroleum Museum*, where Karl Rettenmaier found a former colleague with whom he had worked some years ago, old



Permian Basin Petroleum Museum

home week.

We were definitely in Texas oil country and the museum covered the oil industry history from the initial finds in Pennsylvania, in the late 1800's through the development of the oil industry in Texas to the current day.

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But there was also a wing of the museum dedicated to Jim Hall's Chaparral Racing cars of the 1960's. Beside all the different race car models he developed in this era, there was a mock-up of the 2C that you could get into and have your photo taken. It was a tight fit as the seat was contoured to hold you, so



Stan living the Dream



Took a win in Europe

narrower at the waist and wider at the hips. Being overweight was no help.

Due to the proximity of I-20, right out front, we had to go around the block to get back to the hotel.

That evening we had dinner at the *Wall Street Grill*. Food quality was so-so and a bit expensive. When you're on the road and in unexplored territory, res-

taurants are always a guess. We were on the closing legs of this trip, so you just grin and bear it. Odometer reading for the day was 184 miles.



Day 9 - Road Map

Day 9: Midland to Fredericksburg, map miles 272, one point of interest.

On the road at about 8:15 AM, on what was the first of three days of primarily driving as we skirted below Fort Worth on the return to Cypress. We went southeast, out of Midland, on TX-158 and down to US- 87 and as we drove the terrain and vegetation was changing from desert and low-lying bushes to more rolling hills and trees.

We did a pit stop for gas, and as we prepared to put back on the road, John Reynold's Spitfire erupted in steam pouring out from under the hood. Near the back of the pack in a very large and empty parking lot, I observed the quickness with which Bryan Roy left his car, carrying what I think was a fire extinguisher, not knowing at that moment if it was or was not a fire under John's hood. It was boiling water.

Again, after things had cooled down a bit, our master mechanics determined that the real problem was that John's auxiliary fan, clamped to his radiator, had a broken switch. After some fussing around with the electrical wires, Mike Hado hard-wired the fan to the battery. This only meant that at every stop, John now had to open the hood and unclip the hot wire to stop the fan. A small price to pay this late on

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the tour and with only about 500 miles to go to home base.

After the repair, John drove around the parking lot just to check the fix. It appeared to be working, so



John's Spitfire, not all smoke is fire, this smoke is condensing water



John gets a well-deserved "Chicken"

it was off again to reach San Angelo, about 50 miles down the road. The "chicken" was formally awarded during the evening wine hour.

We drove into San Angelo and stopped at the Party



At Doug Robinson's Party Barn

Barn on Sherwood Blvd. to do a group photo at the drive thru and add Doug Robinson (TR6) to the group for the rest of the drive down to Fredericksburg.

Lunch was mentioned and Doug recommended we go about a half mile down the street to *Harve's Taco Restaurant*. A large facility, but rapid seating amongst a large lunch crowd, good service and a quick quality lunch. *Harve's Tacos - Recommended*.

Several hours later as we approached Fredericksburg, we looped off on TX-16 and drove the 8 or 9 miles to *Street Dreams*, an automobile recovery and rebuild facility for all aging and models of cars. We



Street Dreams Central Shop Area

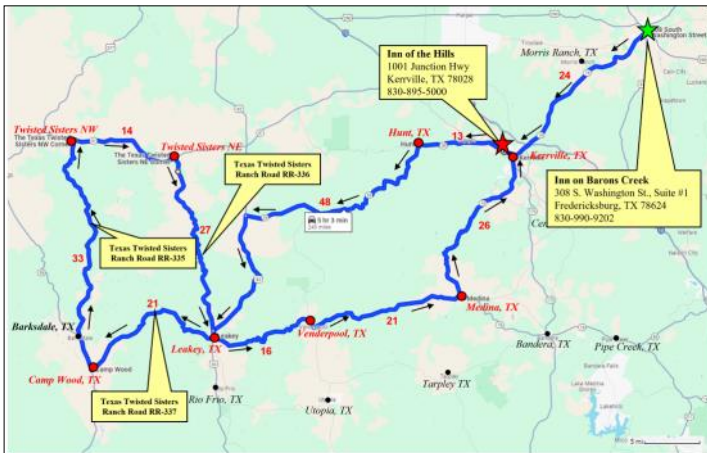
spent about an hour there looking at the restorations and those being worked on, mostly American cars but a truck or two and several foreign models.

Then it was back to town and register in at the hotel, *Inn on Barons Creek*, elevator and stairs on the edge of the Lobby, and a balcony above to lobby and overlooks above the common room, where we held the afternoon wine tasting and considered dinner.

We dined at the *Auslander* restaurant, which was within short walking distance from the hotel and offered decent German cuisine (no sauerbraten, but pretty good pork wiener schnitzel, red cabbage and German potato salad). Odometer reading for the day was 279 miles.

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Day 10: Fredericksburg to Kerrville, by way of the Twisted Sister road system, and the Kerrville Hill Country Art Center/Stonehenge II,



Day 10 - Road Map

map miles 243.

Another interesting day behind the wheel. A day of just driving, but not quite all just driving. In the morning, we said goodbye to Doug Robinson, whose business needs drew him back to San Angelo. Then it was off to Kerrville, some 25 miles away, and when we got there, lots of traffic and streetlights, but we managed to stay together fairly well. As we began getting clear of all the traffic, Dave pulled into a park of some depth and we are confronted with Stonehenge, and Easter Island monoliths.

The Stonehenge is a more complete scaled (90% circumference and 60% in height) replica of the original in the United Kingdom, done by two local men and eventually donated to the Hill Country Art Foundation.

This was true too of the Easter Island Monoliths, being only 13 feet tall. We all took pictures and donated funds to help the arts preservation. We also chose this location to line up and photograph the



Stonehenge II, a rather more complete replica



Cars lined up in front of an Easter Island monolith replica



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mascots and "Rubber Chickens" awarded on the tour.

We then continued the drive to Leaky, TX, and the start of the Twisted Sister's drive. Three roads comprise the route: RR-337 (Ranch Road) from Leaky to Camp Wood, RR-335, Camp Wood to Twisted Sisters Northwest Corner, TX-41 east to the Northeast Corner and RR-336 from back south to Leaky.

Dave and Tyler, Bryan and Neil, Randy and James lead off and about twenty minutes later Stan followed them out. They gathered at Camp Wood and started north on RR-335. It was a clear sunny day, warm but not hot, and the vehicles you had to keep an eye out for were motorcycles, which were going miles an hour faster than you and passing regardless of the road track. These guys seemed to travel in groups of five or six, and you knew they were around when they blasted past you.

Now the Twisted Sisters roads were not so much left and right and hairpins as they were up and down, and some hairpins. The ups and the downs could be steep, but I don't think anyone was smoking their brakes. As we proceeded north, we passed James Moore and friends headed south. He later said he passed us twice, but I only remember seeing him once. At the Northwest Corner we passed a parked bunch of cyclists and as we went east on TX-41 a bunch passed us. At the Northeast Corner there were more parked, but they left ahead of us and we saw them no more. This stop was extended because James Jones was beginning to complain that his TR6 was down on power, or it just wasn't pulling very well.

A harbinger of things to come. His car was becoming hard to re-start, but once started we ran back down RR-336 to Leaky, where we stopped for lunch at the *Bent Rim Grill*, just up RR-336 from town. Not many cars but lots of bikes and bikers.

After lunch, we decided to take the long way back to Kerrville. Once on the road, it was evident that

James was still having issues with his TR6, especially true as we climbed up hills. We finally reached a hill where his car went slower and slower, and near the summit he pulled off. Randy and Stan followed him, and after a few minutes Dave and Tyler returned from up front. Clustered around his open engine bay there was an open discussion on what might be the problem. Some experimental work was done to determine if he had spark (very hard to see in the afternoon sun). It looked like he did have spark, and a shot of starter fluid also provided evidence he had spark. What he seemed not to have was gas. The discussion then centered on equipping him with an electric fuel pump (Dave had one). So that was wired in, and the mechanical pump was decoupled from the liquid lines and isolated. A new hose line fed from the electric pump directly to the carburetor float bowls.

The engine compartment was rechecked to assure we hadn't done anything stupid; the key was twisted, and the engine started right up. We all put our tools away and with James in the lead, we crested the hill. James pulled over twice (as we all held our breath), adjusted something, and pulled out again in the next two miles, but then he seemed to take the bit in his teeth and opened about a half mile lead on Dave for the next 60 miles back into Kerrville. Our hotel, *Inn*



Trying to figure out what's wrong with James's TR6

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Which lines are fuel?, water?, and what's electricity??

and nuts session, all the talk was about Mr. Jones's car. We had some time, so practically everyone reconvened at James's car and Mike Hado took over the conversation. In as much as the electrical fuel pump had gotten him to the motel, let's look at his Stromberg carburetors.

The dome on the front carb was detached and the diaphragm was intact. The dome of the rear carb was detached, and the diaphragm had an edge tear. James was carrying two spare diaphragms. He pulled one out of its bag. Too Small! The opinion was the smaller diaphragm was OK for an MGA engine, but not the larger size needed for a TR6.

WAIT! The FOG (Bryan Roy, 2020 Yellowstone Tour) who carries around half shafts in his TR6 said he had the right replacement. Ten minutes later he returned, and he was right. Bryan's part was the correct size. The Stromberg's were reassembled. The car was started, and James drove it around the com-



The daily drive "Chicken" continues to get around, John to James



Rear diaphragm, looks ruptured to me!!

of the Hills, is a big place, with several different buildings of rooms. The group was scattered about.

Dinner reservations were for later, and at the wine

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Investigating Stromberg carburetors

plex with a big smile on his face. Pulled well, seemed fixed.

As we were assembling to drive to the restaurant, it



Bryan accepts "Mini-Chicken", last award of the tour

was noted that Bryan Roy's TR6 had a taillight out. Dave awarded him with a "mini-chicken" award.

We went to dinner at *Montauk's*, about two miles down the road. Back late to the hotel and ready for

the last day on the road. Odometer reading for Day #10 was 241 miles.



Day 11 - Road Map

Day 11: Kerrville to Cypress, map miles 254, one optional attraction.

Ran into John Reynolds getting ready to leave the parking lot for a short drive to a nearby diner for breakfast. "Get in", he commanded. His Spitfire was jam-packed, but I fit in OK. Down the street we went to the *Hill Country Café* for breakfast. Four other FOG's were there, already eating. One waitress running all over the place, taking orders, bringing orders, refreshing coffee cups and at a near run. More FOG's came in along with regular patrons. We got served and as we ate, another lady and a man showed up and began supporting the single waitress, but they were not nearly as fast as she was. She got a big tip as we left.

Last day on the road, James Jones stayed behind having alerted his wife to meet him at the hotel and follow him to their San Antonio home from there.

For the rest of us it was a short run on I-10 as we left Kerrville, then off onto local roads, and about 100 miles later, we stopped in Bastrop, TX. for lunch, at the *Roadhouse*. After lunch, Dave took us off the planned route to the northeast, to get us over to US -290 a little sooner. Once on US-290 it was a straight shot into Cypress, home in a shorter dis-

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tance and a little less time. Doug Trapp stayed with us to attend the after tour party, before returning to Port Mansfield. Odometer reading was 244 miles.

The After Tour Party was held at *The Backyard Grill*. Most of the trip participants were there and prior to dinner the various tour awards were presented. The awards included the First-to-Breakdown (The Wagner) to James Jones, the overall Chicken Award also to James Jones, the Russ Seto Memorial Award to Mike Hado and the Boy Scout Award to Bryan Roy. Recognition of Tyler Smith's becoming an honorary Texas FOG was also presented.

Map Mileage for the tour was 2446 miles, car odometer mileage was 2449 miles, and as an approximation suggests the tour in 2024 was a 2500 mile trip.

The wrap-up is that it was a good tour, some good hotels and wonderful restaurants, and some hotels and restaurants we might not go back to. Hotel costs were high this year due to when we elected to tour and celestial events, weather held out very well, mostly blue skies, gas was easy to find and not all that expensive and the attractions visited were interesting and not all that expensive. The decision on the 2025 tour awaits!



Group Photo at Judge Roy Bean Museum

Story: Stan Seto

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