

Speedster Rally 9 Paw Paw Michigan --- Kent Sumner

It has been about 5 years since I have had the time to attend a national tour, and this year's speedster tour was relatively close by, so I figured what the heck, I'll load up the car and head east.

Wednesday June 15th, brought scattered showers in the morning, luckily this was the perfect opportunity to try out my new to me enclosed trailer. Boy what a difference it is to not have to worry about hail, storms, etc. when going across country. We arrived in Paw Paw Michigan just in time for the kick off Barbecue, or should I have said Kick off Water and Chips. Unfortunately the caterer didn't plan for enough people and some of us ended up running down the street to Reds Hot Dog Stand and getting our fill there rather than the event. Let's hope this is not an indication of things to come.

Thursday June 16th, up early, but due to weather the days schedule had changed. We were originally scheduled to tour over to St. Josephs Michigan and go aboard a



lake cruise for lunch, however mother nature decided that we head north to the Gilmore Auto Museum. We traveled about 60 miles on back roads through Michigan Wine country and berry fields until we arrived at the museum. Here we found 90 acres of rolling farm land. If you ever get the chance to go to the Gilmore Museum, don't hesitate it is a wonderful venue. The museum is a collection of barns and historical buildings collected from the Midwest, each housing a different collection. There is a Pierce Arrow barn, a Cadillac barn, a Horseless carriage barn, a



collection of over 3000 hood ornaments, gift shop, original restored 1920's shell gas station, and more. We all ate at a 1920's railroad car style diner that is restored to like new condition. After a quick trip down the parade field I found only one T that had to take the vulture wagon, he lost the babbitt thrust washers in his rear end. Another T had a very inexpensive \$2000 dollar brass works Livingston radiator shake apart on the rough road we traveled on the way to the museum, it was leaking pretty bad, but he said he stopped every 10 miles to add two gallons of water each time, but he made it back to the hotel just fine. Total days run round trip 109 miles.



Friday June 17th, woke up an lone be hold the sun is out and no threat of rain today. A quick trip out to the parking lot, and I find the car that lost it rear end back in the lot with a totally rebuilt rear end under it. Seems my father decided to bring a few spare parts to sell and one just happened to be a rear end. A quick deal was made last night and a bunch of the guys pinched in and changed it out right in the lot. And you guessed it. The car that had

the Livingston radiator leak proudly displays a new barn fresh radiator, It wasn't the prettiest thing, but it got him back on the road for the remainder of the tour. Its out of the hotel lot by 8am, we have a 70 mile run south west to St Joseph Michigan. The trip to the St. Josephs was uneventful, with the exception of a weird rattle or squeak my speedster developed. It took about 60 miles before



Finding a Squeak

I was able to track it down. The dash had been made uneven and there was a small 1/16 inch space on the drivers side that at about 40 to 45 miles per hour began a harmonic rattle and it sounded like tweedy bird chirping at us. Nothing a little toilet paper folded up and stuffed into the crevice wouldn't cure, After a quick bathroom stop, and stuffing of the TP, It was a quiet 10 miles to the cruise ships dock. Note to tour organizers" If you have a group of 80 plus people traveling 3 hrs in a model t make sure you have your toilets ready, or at the least a porta pot". We made good time and arrived 1 hour early, only to find the skipper at the pier to tell us that the

Coast Guard would not allow us to board for at least one hour, so thank god for the squeaky dash, I didn't have to go, but there sure were a lot of other Model T's getting in their cars and heading out in search of a bathroom. The cruise up and down the coast lasted 3 hrs , we had the best meal of the trip on board, catered lunch of hot ham and fried chicken, plus all the fixings. This really made up for the water and chip grill out the night before. (Can you tell I just won't let this go). After the cruise we headed out for our next stop of the day, a dinner at camp Manitou. Camp Manitou is a Christian based retreat camp for its staff and children. It is located about 10 miles from our host hotel on dirt roads way deep in the Michigan forest. Here we had another great dinner. Buy the way the same caterer did all of the meals for the whole tour, and he really did a great job. Paw Paw is a very small town, and what the tour planners did not realize was that this weekend all of the caterers and halls were booked with graduation parties, therefore our caterer happened to be the next door neighbor of the tour planner. He never ever cooked for this many people, and let me tell you, he probably won't ever again. I have to give him credit because after the first day he went overboard, and no one ever left hungry. Departed the camp around 7pm and drove approximately 28 miles winding our way back to the hotel. We just missed hitting a deer somewhere on the way, If you think Wisconsin has deer, you have never been to Michigan. Everywhere you look especially in the evening you'll see deer. Total trip total 128 miles. No casualties all cars made it home safe.



Touring

, Woke up to gray skies again, but the pavement is dry. Today it's a four stop day. First it's south to Dowagiac Michigan and a tour of the Heddon Museum. Heddon was one of the first makers of fishing lures and tackle. They also made golf clubs. This was a small museum, but interesting. From there we headed down town to The Wounded Minnow Saloon for lunch. This place seems to be a stop for all traveling bike and car tours in the area. Lunch was good, and afterwards we headed over to the Hartford Speedway. This speedway is a one half mile clay high banked oval. It had to be the roughest track I have ever been on. It was



washboard, and a trip around the track would reveal any loose cotter pin or loose spokes and shake the teeth right out of your jaw. It was not a trip you wanted to take if you hadn't had a bathroom break. After dirtying up the cars we headed down the street to the Van Buren Poor Farm and Museum. This was a turn of the century Museum that once housed the poor, destitute, and insane. I had been looking forward to this stop, because last October I had seen a show on TV that listed this museum as one of the most haunted locations in Michigan. I had to

seek out the right tour guide, but after a little arm twisting he took us around on a ghost tour of the grounds. After the tour we headed back to the camp for the final dinner and banquet. Dinner was great, we said our goodbyes, and returned back to the hotel. Upon arrival at the Hotel I shut the car down and heard a sizzle coming from under the hood. It was really hot today 90 degrees in the shade. When I lifted the hood I discovered the head on my speedster had cracked and it was the steam boiling out of the crack that could be heard. This head had a crack in it when I restored it, but I had it professionally stitched and molded. The stitching held, but a hairline crack in the repair developed. It is only leaking externally, so I am going to keep running it. My father suffered a minor issue also. We noticed that oil was dripping from below his engine. Upon inspection we found the glass oil sight gauge solder had cracked and it was dripping from the sight glass. On another note a white speedster forgot to put his cotter pin in on the driver's side rear wheel. He lost his wheel and was able to stop it and avoid a disaster. It did take us 10 minutes to find the axle keyway. We never did find the brake shoes. Total trip 107 miles. Sunday June 19th thank god for the enclosed trailer, we headed back to Milwaukee, and got caught in some severe weather from Chicago all the way to Milwaukee. We made it back just in time to clearing skies.



Total Tour 344 miles
We averaged 33 to 51 miles per hour
We got 21.5 miles per gallon
We used 1 quart of oil and 2 gallons of water

Sincerely,
Edsul Phord