

Detroit, Michigan Rally with Vintage Birds

We rolled in to Wayne County Fairgrounds Campground on Sunday, July 15 and after setting up in the sweltering heat, we walked down our road in the campground to see who was here. About half the coaches were new to us and we were excited about meeting the folks we didn't know yet.

The campground gave us a handout asking us to limit our electric use because Michigan was experiencing a heat wave and the increased use of air conditioning was blowing breakers at the campground. They encouraged us to use our generators to supplement their electricity. At one point, the campground got quiet. The electricity was out. People poured out of their coaches, consulting with each other in small groups near their site. "Is your electricity off?" was the common question. One gentleman quietly let a few people know that he had hooked up to the 30 amp and his electricity was working. That caused the group to scatter as several men rearranged their electricity arrangements for the afternoon.

The men stayed busy troubleshooting their electric hookups all afternoon until our evening meeting and greet at the Abbott building, which is a beautiful, almost-round building with windows on the upper half of the cement block walls. The center of the room was a round brick fireplace that was covered for the summer.

We were given handouts with detailed driving instructions and schedules of the activities and meals that were planned. Alan gave us some pointers and went over the handouts with us. We enjoyed the slightly cooler evening walking around, meeting new people and catching up with those we knew.

On Monday, July 16, we car-pooled to Ford's Museum. For about \$50 per person, we had 2 days to park and explore the museum, Greenfield Village and a tour of the Ford F-150 plant. We walked for what seemed like miles, trying to see everything we could. The first thing we saw were the armored and very different Presidential vehicles which included the car that Kennedy was shot in. It had been re-done for the next president, so there was no evidence of President Kennedy's tragic death. We saw the chair Lincoln was sitting in at the Ford theater when he was assassinated. It's in bad shape, but the blood stain on the chair makes a distant historical event very real and terrible. We saw the bus where Rosa Parks took her quiet stand against racism. My favorite was the only remaining prototype in the world of the Dymaxion house. It's a round aluminum house with automated closets and movable walls. So cool! I want one! We were back in time for dinner. The caterer, Dave, made the most delicious chicken and ribs, pasta salad and green beans and we spent time visiting with everyone afterward.



Alan Darson addressing the group on the first night of the rally



Guests enjoying our first night's dinner

Tuesday, July 17 began with a hearty catered breakfast and then we were off for Greenfield village and the Ford F-150 plant tour. We began our second day at the Ford campus with a free bus ride from the Ford museum to the plant. I had never seen a plant, so watching from high above the production line, the operation of making a truck was fascinating. The workers had no downtime at all. They had strict schedules of breaks and lunch.

When we returned, we walked through Greenfield village, where Henry Ford bought and dismantled many structures from across the country and the world that he felt were significant historically. We were impressed that there were so many authentic buildings and artifacts in Greenfield Village and Ford museum.

We saw Thomas Edison's house and workshop, Robert Frost's home and my favorite, the Logan county courthouse, where Abraham Lincoln practiced law in Illinois. It's my favorite because I'm from an adjoining county in Illinois. The town that sold it to Ford is still pretty sore that they basically gave away an authentic Abe Lincoln historical site.



From left- Kelly Fedeli, Alan & Debi Darson, Shane Fedeli, Ann & Bill Tarrier

That night was a very special event...the First Annual Men's Potluck! We had a big spread with leftovers from our catered supper the night before and many other things the men brought. The ladies felt it was a huge success.

Our next day's tour destination, Detroit Diesel, provided a lavish breakfast and lunch buffet along with an all day, guided tour on trams. This plant made engines that many Blue Bird motor homes have. Our main tour guide, Pam, had been at the company since she was 16 years old. She was the first woman employee and was still working after more than 40 years with the company.

After another superb catered supper at the campground, Pam, our tour guide, came out on her own time and looked at some Detroit Diesel engines in various Blue Birds. She, and most everyone watching, got emotional as she reminisced about the engines. She likely had a part in the making of some of the engines. She signed several engines and thanked the owners for taking such good care of "her" engines after listening to the throaty roars of the powerful diesels as their owners fired them up.



Machine operator installing crankshaft & bearings at the Detroit Diesel Factory



Alan Darson, Paul Cambron, Randy Shrimplin & Pam Inspecting cylinder liners and machining

After 3 very full and fun days of activities, Thursday, July 19 was all about relaxation. Another catered campground breakfast, then to Belle Isle for a relaxing morning watching boats on the river in lovely weather. Campers further relaxed with a Detroit river boat cruise. We were on our own for dinner and most chose to partake of Detroit's famous Greektown restaurants before heading back to our vintage Blue Birds at the campground.

Friday, July 20, we slept in and all met at the General Motors Heritage Museum in Sterling Heights for another incredible tour of concept and limited edition cars, trucks, and other vehicles. Alan went above and beyond in getting us entrance to this museum, as it's essentially a special events venue for GM bigwigs. We returned for our final catered dinner which was delectable, as always. Door prizes were given away, final bits of Detroit facts were given and goodbyes were said to those who had to leave the next day.



Dawn & Dave Hollis at the GM Heritage Museum



Charlie & Ingrid Bateman enjoying Alan's famous Boston Coolers



Randy Shrimplin & Alan Darson Preparing Boston Coolers

The rally was attended by the following Vintage Birds chapter members and guests of the chapter

Charlie & Ingrid Bateman

Gregg & Patty Kizer

Bill & Ann Tarrier

Carl & Sheila Bobruk

Al & Erica Perna

Gardner & Cathy Yeaw

Alan & Debi Darson

Randy & Sonya Shrimplin

Charlie & Carol Mitchell

Carl & Judy Breiner

Dave & Tina Styf

Shane & Kelly Fedeli

Richard & Mary Bryon

Dick & Patty Warren

Steve & Maria Weisblatt

Paul & Debra Cambron

Rowland & Joanne Rose

Dawn & Dave Hollis

David & Barb Ross

My final thought about this Detroit, Michigan rally: Vintage Birds ROCKS!!! -Submitted by Dawn Hollis, editor of *Blue Bird Tails* - <http://bluebirdtails.com/>

