

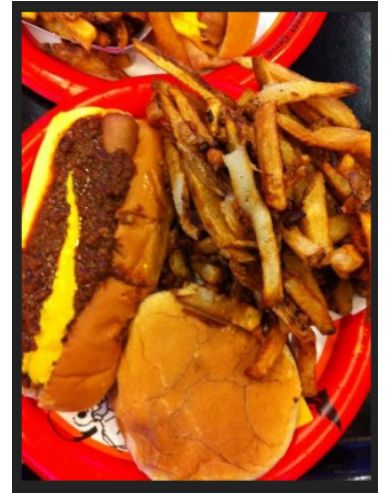
PEACH STATE SPRING '17 DRIVING TOUR:

MACON. Where Soul lives!

Friday May 12 and Saturday May 13, 2017



We met at the Varsity in downtown Atlanta at 10:00AM Friday. We found new Peach Staters Eddie and Suzanne Bibb (Birmingham, AL) waiting in a '93 STS, Jay and Elaine Friedman and Elaine's sister Donna (the '49 stayed home because of the threat of rain). Baileys were in the Eldorado with the top up. One of the carhops offered me a LOT of hot dogs for my car... O'Neills were thrashing about east of us in their red '78 Biarritz, so we told them to run on down the road and meet us there. We saw Lee and Mary Jean drive past us on North Avenue, and figured they were lost. When I called, we discovered they had joined up with David Smith and Nancy McCall on the other side of the restaurant! We slipped out the back side of the parking lot and made an uneventful left turn onto North Avenue. (Thank goodness it was not rush hour! Tom, we lucked out in midtown on a weekday).



We meandered a couple miles through town, catching thumbs up, then made a right onto Moreland Avenue, US Highway 23 south. It didn't take long to find the open road on our way to Juliette. Blue Highways! We rolled into Juliette and debarked for the Whistle Stop Café! Lewis and Vickie Kelly were already there, holding down reserved tables in a crowded place! Baskets of Fried Green Tomatoes, of course. Ribs ol' Fred Flintstone would envy... Some great looking fried chicken, and even a veggie plate. I figured I couldn't miss with a BBQ, pretty sure it was pork. We had time to wander around; downtown Juliette has become something of a shopping spot for crafts and antiques. We tried to recruit one business owner, who was asking how to fix the top on her '68 DeVille convertible. She has our brochure...



We caravanned seven miles to the historic Jerrell plantation house (right). We viewed a video of its beginnings in the 1840s, then some of us walked the plantation (not me). Back in the cars, we missed the turn back to RT 23, so we cruised two-lane backroads. Heck, it's a driving tour! We arrived in Macon from the east



side, which avoided the freeway all together. We hit the visitor center in Macon about 4:00, behind schedule, but in time to plan our Saturday. Staff there were very helpful!

We drove through downtown, along tree-lined streets with old storefronts, boutiques and shops. Passing by Mercer University, there was little evidence of the graduation day crowd. Hey! That was the Allman Brothers' "Big House"!

View over the expansive hood of Goldilocks (right)



Our hotel, the Fairfield Inn on Plantation Drive. was a welcome sight. Rory and Lu came in looking tired – they had driven out to the OTHER Fairfield Inn on Arkwright Road. Our place was under construction, but the staff was helpful, and tried really hard to please us. Great rates, decent rooms, freebies galore. I'd go back, wouldn't you?

We doubled up and headed over to the Roadhouse steak joint. The crowd was pleased to see the land yachts, but the wait was over an hour. Barb and I went back to the hotel and waited near the cars. We heard the dinner was good, but NOISY. As evening approached, we got out the coolers. Scattered about the "tailgates" of two hulking Eldorados, we regaled each other with tall stories of history on the road. Bedtime came early. Was it the scotch?

Saturday morning: A good breakfast buffet in the hotel... Friedmans went exploring for a family home, and O'Neills struck out for home. But despite the offer to scatter out in smaller groups, the rest of us stuck together for the foray to a landmark site. We arrived at Hay House in a drizzle, the first ones in line. It's a big old, historic house – very opulent. A humongous 23,000 square feet on four or five floors! The young man who served as our guide really got into his orientation. We walked around the place for well over an hour and took a ton of photos. We all agreed, this might be a destination for a future December, since they decorate the entire property for Christmas, like the Biltmore House. Lewis – let's get it organized! Around noon we paraded over to the highly recommended lunch spot, The Rookery. Most of us got burgers, but I am a sucker for meatloaf. My rock n roll hero, with mashed potatoes.

After lunch the Bibbs headed home to Alabama. The rest of us got back on the back road to Warner-Robins. The air force base is vast, and the Georgia Aviation Museum is a huge magnet for vintage vehicle types. When you enter, no charge, you are greeted by an F-15 Strike Eagle. Impressive! Four buildings contain a major collection of aviation memorabilia from World War I to the present day. They had historic U.S. Air Force aircraft, missiles, and cockpits on display - including a B-29 like the Enola Gay and under reconstruction was a B-17 "Flying Fortress." It demanded a lot of walking, and some of us hung out near the gift shop. But I was scouting for the Sikorsky HH-3E, the "Jolly Green Giant." And a giant it was – a monster that dwarfed most everything except the biggest bombers. I bought a book on the B-58 Hustler, which debuted in 1956 as Strategic Air Command's nuclear-armed mainstay. And I bought a model of a P-61 Black Widow fighter, which few people know about from the skies above 1945's Europe.



Lewis and Vickie rode with Barb and me, Lee and Mary Jean rode with the Smiths, and we found a pretty good Mexican restaurant close by the hotel. Good grub, and this left time for retiring to the hotel for "happy hour." Lee shared video of his track exploits in the Bug-eyed Sprite, and we got a preview of the others' photos from the trip. Might have had a toddy or two, but again we turned in early, exhausted but happy.

Sunday morning: We got up late on Sunday and had a leisurely breakfast. I know the Kellys departed for Montgomery when we left; David and Nancy were not far behind us. Dunns took off first, heading for Monticello for 11:00 AM services. The pastor they've known for decades was preaching this morning. We followed them to Monticello and kept going, heading northbound through Monroe, to Winder and then west – all on marvelous two-lane, unoccupied back roads. The little towns along the way were either asleep or worshipping. We got home, tired but happy.

The tour earned us all 250 Round Trip CLC touring miles under the touring program.