

Mississippi Drive – 2017

(AKA Tunnel of Trees)

By Paula Beckman

(with input from Linda McCann & Ron Beckman)

On Saturday, September 16th, 19 Miatas (all models were represented) gathered in Boscobel to travel the driftless area of SW Wisconsin. Jim & Joanne T. took the lead, with Ron & Paula B. acting as sweep.

The morning started out cloudy as we drove along the Wisconsin River, then up into the rolling hills on curvy roads meandering through the farm fields. The views from the hilltops were beautiful, overlooking the sculptured farm fields of golden topped beans and the green and gold of corn. (That reminds me, GO PACK!) Some of the roads were like a roller coaster resulting in belly flips!

We made our way to the Great River Road along the mighty Mississippi. (Did you know there is a town in Wisconsin called Poy Sippi, which was named for it's founder? Well, the river was named after Poy Sippi's wife. That's right, it was called Mrs. Sippi! Hee hee.) Then back into the hills, but this time through the trees. At times through a tunnel of trees and a few "where'd the road go" moments.

Appropriately, there was one scheduled U-turn at County UU, which led to a spectacular view of the river, many twisties and an impressive drop back down to the river. Then we stopped at the lock and dam at Genoa for a chance to stretch our legs and enjoy the view.

The sun came out and the cool breeze scoop was installed. After a short drive overlooking lovely valleys, we arrived at the Hideaway Brew Pub & Restaurant in Chaseburg for lunch. This is an historic bar with legendary food. I know this, because the sign on the building said so. We had an enjoyable, leisurely lunch with good food, friendly conversation and tasty refreshments.

The afternoon turned up the heat, so we turned on the air. Gray clouds gathered to the west as we traversed the twisties for a short drive to the NOAA weather station in La Crosse. Todd, son of Terry & Kathy R., gave us a tour of the facility and explained how they go about forecasting the weather. They operate 24/7/365, with the staff rotating shifts. They use a variety of models, including American and European models to help them develop their forecasts. Special thanks to Todd and the rest of the staff for the informative presentation and their patience.

After the NOAA tour, we hopped over to Grand Dad Park to overlook La Crosse from Grand Dad Bluff. What a view!

We left La Crosse driving south on Hwy 35, then drove back into the hills, headed toward Viroqua and the end of the day. We traveled more curvy roads through the trees, colored by red sumac, accented by yellows and some orange from trees that were beginning to turn.

Driving the hills through Amish country, we only saw one horse drawn buggy, which thankfully was going in the opposite direction. We had to round up a couple of stray cars that took a wrong turn, but it didn't take long to get everyone back on course.

Some other observations during the day included:

- Not many bikers, but one brave rollerblader dude in an orange vest, whizzing along with ponytail flying.
- A billboard advertising that Vernon County Crime Stoppers pay cash for tips. Hmmmmm, I wonder how much they would pay for the apprehension of spirited drivers.
- A giant and well rounded aluminum turkey that graced a lawn, shining in the late afternoon sun. Quite a surprise, since Turkey Day is still 2 ½ months away.

Soon we arrived at Gassers Bar & Grill in Viroqua for a nice dinner, libations and good conversation. Thanks to all who had a part in making for a great day of driving the fantastic roads of SW Wisconsin.