

Miatas Play in Nashville 3rd Verse

by Marcy & Jim Hotz

Seven Wisconsin couples caravanned to Nashville, led by our fearless leader and first spouse, Tom and Mary Lynn Cinealis. The trip to and from Music City was every bit as fun and exciting as the days we spent in Nashville itself. Tom and ML had picked out some awesome western-style shirts and Lin Carlson had them emblazoned with a beautiful, colorful, large logo on the back of the shirt.

The ride on Sunday, September 11th to our starting point, Tinley Park, IL, was uneventful for most of us. We dined in various places near the Comfort Inn (the Hotzes and Johns chose Japanese cuisine) and got ready for the 2-day ride to the Tennessee rally.



Monday, Sept. 12th

The Hotzes volunteered to sweep, not knowing that this would be a permanent post for the trip. No worries, we enjoy it.

The Tuckwoods met up with us en route as we stopped for lunch at a Steak and Shake somewhere in Illinois.

After a few wonderful Miata roads where we were followed for miles by a woman in a Packer-mobile, we stopped at General 3 Metal Spinning Company in Carterville, IL, where we were treated to a demonstration of (what else) metal spinning. We all found it very interesting and each left with samples of pizza pans and bundt cake pans if we had enough room in the trunk (most didn't).



More squiggly roads ensued, and before you knew it, we were in Marion, IL where we ate the 17th Street Barbecue and got comfortable in the Marion Comfort Inn.

Tuesday, Sept. 13th

Tom found some more squiggly roads for us to follow. However we made what we thought was a wrong turn which involved a face-off with 3 junkyard dogs. So we backtracked back to the original road, drove through the small town, and crossed over onto the 3-dog road which turned out to be the correct one after all.

Our first stop of the day was at the Garden of the Gods near Harrisburg, IL. More than 320 million years ago, the wind and rain patiently started to chisel away at large

deposits of sedimentary rock located in what is now Shawnee National Forest. Over the years, the elements have sculpted some of the most stunning and extraordinary rock formations known to man. This garden of sandstone sculptures and vast untouched wilderness was fittingly named Garden of the Gods.

We took a quarter-mile nature walk through the rocky terrain, snapping photos every few seconds.



From the rocky garden we waggled our way to the Ohio River where we loaded ourselves onto a ferry (it was free) and were transported from Illinois into Kentucky. We picked a place for lunch via GPS but it was closed when we got there. A couple of buildings down the street we found the Main Street Italian Grill, which provided a wide variety of delicious dishes. We all left quite sated.

We drove through “The Land Between the Lakes,” a United States National Recreation Area located in Kentucky and Tennessee between Lake Barkley and Kentucky Lake. The area was designated a National Recreation Area by President John F. Kennedy in 1963. The recreation area was originally managed by the Tennessee Valley Authority but jurisdiction has since been transferred to the United States Forest Service. We hoped to see some bison in this area, but alas, we saw none. We did stop in the park ranger’s headquarters which gave us some educational facts on the construction and maintenance of the TVA and nature preserve.

We pulled into Oak Grove, KY for the night. Most of us were still full from lunch, but a few folks went out to a Mexican restaurant which was in dire need of décor.

Wednesday, Sept. 14th

We started the morning on back roads and gorgeous trails until we were stopped by the Cumberland River. A large ferry took us from one bank to the other. Jim Tuckwood tried to negotiate a \$5 for 6 car deal, but the attendant looked at him like he had a third eye and Jim reluctantly paid him the \$1/car fee to cross. (No sense of humor.)

We found a Shoney’s restaurant and stopped for lunch. They had a large southern buffet. No one left hungry.

We arrived at the Guest House hotel in Nashville, the main gathering place for the Nashville Miata rally. Chris Provencher, our Nashville host, greeted us in the lobby and had us sign up for planned rides and events. We learned at that time, that our seven cars from Wisconsin plus one car from Ohio comprised the entire event!

Nevertheless, after freshening up, we all drove to a night club called Third and Lindsley at the corner of Third and Lindsley (Street). We had dinner in a reserved balcony area

overlooking the stage and stayed for a great country music show featuring Six Wire which was one of the bands on the TV series *Nashville*. Their musical guests were also stars on *Nashville*. It was a very late night and tomorrow's ride was scheduled to start at 8 AM.



Thursday, Sept. 15th

This morning we headed for Fontanel, the mansion of Barbara Mandrel. En route, we ran into Jeff _____, a member of the Nashville Miata Club who restores classic and antique vehicles, many of which were owned by music and TV celebrities. We saw an impressive array of renovated automobiles. From there we drove on to Fontanel.

The Mansion at Fontanel is a 33,000 square foot log cabin and former home of Country Music legend and Hall of Fame member Barbara Mandrel and is open for daily tours. The mansion boasts over 20 rooms, 13 bathrooms, 5 fireplaces, 2 kitchens, an indoor pool and even an indoor shooting range.



Chris had reserved a long table at Café Fontanella on the grounds as we entered. We were able to order from their large menu. After lunch we had time to visit the winery, the distillery and the gift shop before our tour of the mansion. Steven Whitson, was an engaging and entertaining guide. He had plenty of background information and humorous anecdotes. He entertained us with songs and his amazing ability to remember everyone's names.

We returned to the Guest House and attendees split up to go to the restaurant of our choice.

Friday, Sept. 16th

Bright and early this morning we all drove out to the historic town of Granville. A singing couple serenaded us on our arrival with country-western tunes, in the style of Johnny Cash and June Carter. The Depression-era town transported us all back in time to learn how people lived in decades past. We toured the Sutton Homestead which had artifacts from the 30s, 40s, and 50s, many of which were familiar to us. Then we went through a building which housed old farm equipment, and a vehicle museum with classic automobiles. We had lunch in a restaurant adjacent to the General Store. The southern-style lunch included southern-fried chicken, black-eyed pea soup, a salad, mashed potatoes and gravy, corn bread muffins and a huge piece of coconut cake for dessert. After lunch the ladies went shopping at the local clothing store and the guys

sat around schmoozing. One bit of excitement occurred when Chris' friend got sick, possibly heat stroke, and was taken by ambulance to the hospital. She is OK.

We found our way back to the Guest House by GPS and walked to Caney Fork, a nearby barbecue restaurant where we had our fill of chicken and ribs and enjoyed a local trio singing country music.

Saturday, Sept. 17th

With Chris' friend in the hospital, we decided to forego any planned activities so he could stay with his friend. With the day to ourselves, we split up and did our own sight-seeing and shopping. Some of the group went to the Frist Center for the Visual Arts to see an Italian Concept Car Exhibit called *Bellissima!* and other downtown venues. Others went to the Belle Meade Plantation, an historic mansion whose grounds now function as a museum. Belle Meade Plantation consists of 30 remaining acres and includes a winery, visitor's center, a log cabin, dairy, carriage house, stable, mausoleum and a reconstructed slave quarters. Thoroughbreds such as Seabiscuit, Secretariat and Barbarro, and every horse to race in the Kentucky Derby since 2003 can trace their bloodlines directly back to Belle Meade!

Later, we met for dinner at the Acme Feed and Seed, a restaurant in downtown Nashville with 22,000 square feet of cocktail, culinary and entertainment space. The first floor at Acme is an updated take on the classic honkytonk with eclectic, fast-casual cuisine, 28 beers on tap, communal tables and live music featuring local Nashville musicians. We took a shuttle back to our hotel after enjoying dinner and the music of two local bands.

Sunday, Sept. 18th

Today we said our good-byes to our host Chris and to Nashville, and checked out of the Guest House. Tom led us on some squiggly and majestic roads on our way back to Wisconsin. Along the way we drove through Mill Springs National Cemetery where we noted a large number of women's names in a section of their own. We stopped for lunch at – believe it or not – a Big Boy restaurant. Yes, for those who remember the Big Boy, it still exists and it is still delicious.

Next stop was Berea, KY, best known for its art festivals, historic restaurants and buildings, and as the home to Berea College, a private, liberal arts college. Due to the high number of arts and crafts produced, Berea is a tourist attraction. We stopped in a few shops in downtown Berea and found many treasures there.

From there, we drove to our lodging, the Red Roof Inn. We made dinner reservations at the Old Town Grill restaurant near the motel, letting them know we would be watching the first half of the Packer game there. Their normal closing time was 9 PM, but the staff stayed on until half time, enjoying our camaraderie and imbibing with us. We

watched the last half of the game back at the motel in the breakfast room which they left open for our use.

Monday, Sept. 19th

Monday began with a stop at the Berea Art Center within the afore-mentioned college. We saw many beautiful hand-crafted items on display and even purchased a few. We drove some lovely squiggly roads and found one so narrow that an oncoming vehicle would have caused us to back up – there was no other way to go, with a drop-off on one side and a hill on the other. Two cars at the back of the pack got separated from the group and one passenger worried that they might die out there in the hill country with nothing but red Twizzlers for food. It turned out that the two cars were only a short distance behind the pack and actually hadn't made a wrong turn, but were out of communication with the pack due to the hills and curves. We will long remember Wildcat Road!

Once together again, we continued only a short distance to cross the highway for our next stop, the Wild Turkey distillery. Wild Turkey is a brand of Kentucky straight bourbon whiskey distilled and bottled near Lawrenceburg, Kentucky. We toured the distillery, learning about the malting process, fermentation and distillation. We visited the aging houses where the bourbon is aged in oak barrels. Following this, we went to a tasting of four of their products, and then to the gift shop.

We continued up twisty roads through the town of Rabbit Hash, where the mayor is a red and white border collie named Lucy Lou, elected in 2008. However, we were greeted not by the mayor, but by a Chihuahua wandering the road whom we believed to be a traffic cop.

Tom was looking for the ferry across the Ohio River, but learned from locals that the ferry, although funded, had not yet been built, even though two years had passed. It shows on the map, it just doesn't yet exist. Lacking a ferry, we crossed over the river on a bridge.

Two hours later we arrived at our motel in Columbus, IN. We dropped off our luggage and walked to the restaurant of our choice near the motel. Reconvening in the central breakfast area of our motel, we sipped bourbon into the night reminiscing about our adventures.

Tuesday, Sept. 20th

By now, our sights were set on getting home expeditiously, so we took "the big slab" (i.e., the interstate highways) back to Wisconsin. A great time was had by all!