

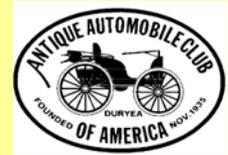


# THE CHESAPEAKE BULLETIN

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## Family Vacation In Our '50 Mercury

By Gary Wilmer

Last year at the 2004 Early Ford V8 Eastern National Meet, there was a group promoting the 2005 Meet in Hiawassee, GA, June 21 to 24. Having been to many EFV-8 national meets, I collected the information because it sounded like a very nice area, and not that far away.

Vicky and I discussed the possibility of making the meet a family vacation and decided we should do it. It's an antique automobile enthusiast's dream, a touring vacation in an old car.

The next question was what to drive – modern, or one of our flathead V-8s; the 1950 Mercury or the 1937 Ford? I wanted to drive an antique, so the larger 1950 Mercury (a semi-modern car) was the logical choice.

In discussing the trip with Vicky's parents, we decided to invite them to go along. We didn't think there would be a problem with six people in a big 1950 Mercury sedan, traveling more than 600 miles, with no A/C in June.

However, with seven-year-old twins we wanted to make sure the trip would include things to do for the whole family. We decided to leave home on Sunday and visit Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge, TN, which are somewhat on the way to Georgia. We found a timeshare in Gatlinburg that was suitable for six.

The week before leaving I made sure the car was ready to go. The engine oil, transmission, o-drive,

and rear end fluids were changed, and the wheel bearings greased. All other fluids, hoses, belts, brakes, tires, lights, etc. were checked. I felt confident the car was ready. NCR EFV-8 club member Mac McGovern lent me a "care package" of spare parts – water pumps, spare distributor, hoses, belts, etc. We were ready for any road emergency.

On Sunday, June 19, 2005 at 6:15 AM we left Hampstead, traveled thru Harpers Ferry, WV, and on



to Winchester where we picked up I-81. Our first stop was for gas in Weyers Cave, VA. At this point I noticed my turn signals were not working. OH NO, a car problem this early in the trip! An investigation determined that it was a blown fuse caused by cramming so much "stuff" in the trunk that the taillight socket shorted out,

blowing a fuse. Now, where are the spares? I could not find one anywhere in the car. I thought I had every part and tool I could think of, but apparently overlooked a one inch fuse.



I went inside the gas and go store, not feeling confident that they would have any fuses, much less the older glass style, but they did! Now, we had turn signals. From here, Vicky's dad, David, took over driving. Having no additional problems, and clocking 477 miles for the day, we reached the timeshare,

Mountain Loft, in Gatlinburg at 6:15 PM

Monday, June 20<sup>th</sup>, we went to an amusement type Park called Ober Gatlinburg. We rode a tram to the park, took a cable car up the side of the mountain,

*Continued on the next page >>*

*Pictured above: our 1950 Mercury at Lake Chatuge in Hiawassee, GA; and part of the show field in Hiawassee - the Blue Ridge Mountains are in the background.*

**Family Vacation In Our '50 Mercury – continued**  
saw a Black bear habitat, rode little sleds down the mountain, and enjoyed a pleasant day overall.

Tuesday, June 21<sup>st</sup>, we visited Floyd Garrett’s Muscle Car Museum in Pigeon Forge. Over 90 muscle cars from the 60s and 70s were inside a huge steel building. The museum had all types of automobilia - signs, gas pumps, literature, engine displays, etc.



*Floyd Garrett Muscle Car Museum in Pigeon Forge, TN*

From the museum, we decided to take a tour over the Great Smoky Mountains, stopping at different overlooks and hiking trails. There were miles and miles of winding roads with breathtaking views. Going up the mountains was no problems; the Mercury pulled them with ease. However coming down the mountains, with 7 to 9 percent grades, the brakes started to get hot, and we could smell them overheating. After awhile I was having trouble slowing down, much less stopping. So, we pulled off the road in a picnic area next to a beautiful stream and relaxed for about an hour. No more sightseeing over the mountains.

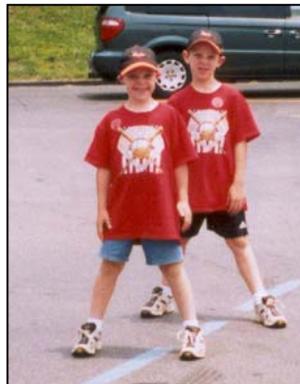
Wednesday, June 22<sup>nd</sup>, we checked out of the timeshare and headed to Georgia. Our route took us right over the Smoky Mountains. We stopped and had a picnic lunch by a babbling stream and took a short hike before getting back in the car. We enjoyed the ride to Hiawassee without further braking problems and arrived at the Holiday Inn about 2:30. We had driven a total of 626 miles from home.

The rest of the day we relaxed, washed the car, and walked around the host hotel viewing the V-8s in the hotel parking lot. We also celebrated Andrew and Todd’s birthday with a special birthday dinner and cupcakes. The waitress brought them each a huge bowl of ice cream when she learned that it was their birthday.

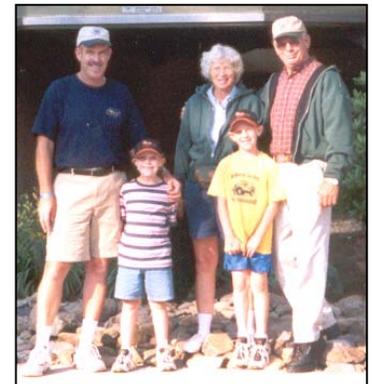
Thursday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, was car show day. We all piled into the Mercury and drove a short distance to the show field. What a beautiful location. It was set in a tiered, grassy park overlooking mountains and Lake Chatuge. The view was awesome. With plenty of trees along the edges, and temperatures in the low to mid 80s with low humidity, it made for a nice relaxing day. I don’t know the exact number of cars at the meet, but my guess is that there were between 150 and 200. The park bordered Lake Chatuge and had trails that went through the azalea and rhododendron garden. Vicky and her parents took the boys down to the lake after lunch and let them swim a little.

Thursday evening after cleaning up and dinner, we attended a private showing of the classic movie “Thunder Road” with Robert Mitchum. It was shown in a full size theater a few miles down the road for the price of \$3.00. The movie was excellent. However, seeing some early Fords and Mercurys wrecked and blown up was not.

Friday, June 24<sup>th</sup>, featured a train ride. At 9:00 AM we boarded three buses that took us to the city of Blue Ridge for departure on the Blue Ridge Railway. The train ride ran along the beautiful Toccoa River through the scenic Blue Ridge Mountains to the town of McCaysville, on the Georgia-Tennessee line. In fact, there is a blue line painted on the ground through the town separating the two states. We enjoyed lunch



*Twins are in two states by straddling Georgia-Tennessee state line.*



*Gary, Andrew & Todd with Ellen & David Kelley, Vicky’s parents, at Ober Gatlinburg.*

at one of the restaurants, in what appeared to be an old home, before we took the bus back to Hiawassee in time for the awards banquet.

The Awards Banquet was held a few miles away from the show field and host hotel at the Fieldstone Resort.

*Continued on the next page >>*

**Family Vacation In Our '50 Mercury – continued**

It was located right on the shore of Lake Chatuge. The banquet was held under a huge tent that was set up to serve 400 people. The weather was cool with low humidity; mountains and water all around. A beautiful setting!

We enjoyed the company of Keith and Jeanette Henry, NCR members from Australia who were making the show as part of an extended vacation. Also attending was another couple from Australia. The Henry's knew them but didn't know they were going to be at the show. What a coincidence. Vicky and I were given a ride back to the hotel by the other couple. I don't remember their names, but we had a very pleasant evening with them.

On Saturday, June 25<sup>th</sup>, we left Hiawassee at 7:30 AM and headed for home. We drove straight thru, except for a few stops for gas and to eat, to Harrisonburg, VA, where we decided to spend the night at a Motel 8. We could have driven all the way home, but it was a long day and we were all tired.

We arrived home in Hampstead, MD on Sunday around lunchtime. From here David and Ellen had another 2 hours to drive home to Chestertown, on the Eastern Shore.

We all had a wonderful time. The weather was great, the Hiawassee group had everything planned to perfection, the area and the tour locations were beautiful, and the '50 Mercury ran great. [A Perfect Vacation!](#)

**Facts and figures from our vacation:**

Total miles driven – 1310

Gas mileage – with much mountain driving, from 12 mpg to 17 mpg.

Gas prices - \$1.99 to \$2.11 per gallon.

*All of us would like to see these prices again soon.*

Vehicle problems – turn signal fuse and overheated brakes. That's it!

The Mercury ran perfectly!



**MERCURY**

**Remembering Bob Parks**

Judy & Earl Beauchamp, Jr.

It is with a great sadness and a heavy heart that I have to write still again about the death of a very dear friend in AACA, Robert W. Parks, Jr. This is the third AACA friend of mine, close friends, who have passed in the last six weeks. He passed away August 19, 2005 at the age of 79.

Kathy and Bob, Judy and I all joined the Chesapeake Region, AACA about the same time . . . us in 1962, they in 1963. We met at a club picnic and have been friends ever since. Our younger daughter was just taking her first steps and their Cindy was a baby in her mother's arms. Kathy & Bob lived in Towson, MD. And we lived in Glen Burnie. Because of our wide-area local telephone exchanges in the Baltimore area, we were never more than a phone call away.

Bob was a faithful member of the AACA and his local Region. He served as President of Chesapeake Region in 1968 and was President of Bull Run Region in 1989-90. Shortly after his term as President of the Bull Run Region, he became Membership Chairman, and he was still in that position at the time of his death. He was a National Judge and judged at many local meets as well.

He was an easy going, slow talking, gentle kind of a man. He was another one of those people who would do almost anything he could to help you. He bought and sold many cars, had big plans for restoration, but he always made sure family came first. He never quite got any of his cars restored to national standards, but he had a lot of fun with them.

Honest, dependable, helpful, Bob Parks was another one of those men you could always count on. Again, the best thing I can say about Bob Parks is that he was truly a "good fellah".

Bob never stopped being a member of the Chesapeake Region until the day he died. After all, Baltimore was his home town. Many new members may not remember him; how he handled the Laurel Auto Show all those years, but 25-30 years ago, he was one of the most important cogs in the Chesapeake Region. Mr. Good Guy. Anybody that knew him liked him. Judy and I will miss him.