



*Bay Area  
Horseless Carriage Club*

A personal report on the

## 64<sup>th</sup> National HCCA Tour in Portland, Oregon

July 26-30, 2011

by Lynn Kissel

With my apologies to members of the Bay Area Horseless Carriage, I did not take nearly enough pictures nor pay enough attention to present a fair and balanced overview of the national tour that was hosted by the Portland Regional Group of the HCCA. Of necessity, what follows is a fragmentary and biased report based on my personal experiences on the tour.

Jeanne and I participated with Annie (our 1914 KisselKar 4-40 Touring) in the "Third Time's A Charm" Tour in Portland. This was the third time that Portland had hosted the tour, each offering separated by 20 years. Later, at the banquet at the end of the third day of touring, we applauded the dozen or so drivers that had participated in all three tours. Some had used the same car in all three tours!



There were many remarkable sights and experiences on the tour. One was the multiple three-generation touring families that I saw. Another was the number of women and men that dressed so beautifully in period costumes.

Other BAHCC members we recognized on the tour were Johnny and Chris Crowell with their 1914 Simplex, John and Carol O'Neill with their 1913 Apperson, and Fred and Nancy Byl with their 1915 Ford. The O'Neill's received the 1913-and-later people's choice award at the banquet for their wonderful 1913 Apperson 4-55 "Jack Rabbit" Touring.



We are relatively new comers to horseless carriages, having acquired Annie in 2008. Although we've participated in local and regional tours, this was our first national tour with the HCCA and we anticipated the event with great interest.



That interest was piqued by the fact that Glenn and Shirley Slack, organizers of the tour with the Portland Regional Group, are friends and owners of a beautiful 1915 KisselKar 6-42 7-passenger Touring. Under normal circumstances it would be reasonably unusual to

find two KisselKars on an HCCA tour as there are only 34 pre-16 KisselKar cars known to exist in the world. On this tour we had no less than \*three\* as Bob and Nancy Ullrich joined us with their handsome 1910 KisselKar 4-50 Toy Tonneau.

We left our home several days before the tour to visit Joe and Isabelle Leaf, friends and (modern, 1920s) Kissel owners in Poulsbo, Washington. So we had multiple and much more than normal exposures to Kissels and Kissel owners over the week.

Arriving in Portland, we could not help but be impressed with the high level of organization and large number of volunteers helping with the HCCA tour. Volunteers directed us to the ample space provided for trailer parking. After unloading Annie, we parked her with many of the other 92 cars that were signed up for the tour.

The tour had three days of active driving plus two half days before and after for socializing. Participants were encouraged to arrive early, or stay late and enjoy many side attractions that were documented in a wonderful newsletter-style publication that we received a month or so before the tour.

The tour booklet and materials that we received during registration were another marvel. The booklet with clear schedules, directions, graphics and text describing the significance of sites visited was printed on glossy paper and professionally prepared. A cast 3" brass medallion was a welcome keepsake. From my perspective, the tour was incredibly well planned and it ran as smooth as silk, although I guess that the organizers confronted many challenges behind the scenes.

**Our first day tour** was a 75 mile drive along the scenic Columbia River. We first stopped at Vista House, an octagonal stone structure built in 1916-18 as a memorial to Oregon pioneers. Perched 733 feet above the river, it affords spectacular views of the valley cut by the river. Later we visited 620' Multnomah Falls then drove on to Rooster Rock State Park for lunch.

We saw many disabled horseless carriages along our route, keeping the three trouble trucks very busy. I was somewhat surprised by the number I saw experiencing difficulty, wondering if this was unusual for a national tour.

We were fortunate to have Wade and Jeanne Smith as passengers on all three days of the tour. Hailing from San Antonio, Texas, they were great companions, as they were witty and entertaining. By day two, Wade was sitting in the front with me and the two Jeanes shared the rear seat so that the boys and girls could carry on separate conversations with minimal interference.

**On day two** we traveled over 140 miles and climbed to the 6000' level on Mount Hood, an 11,239' snow-capped peak that is the tallest in Oregon. Our destination was a great lunch at the Timberline Lodge, built in the 1930s on the south side of the stratovolcano. (Also known as a composite volcano, it is a tall cone built up of many layers of hardened lava, pumice and ash. Unlike shield volcanoes, stratovolcanoes have a steep profile and periodic explosive eruptions – think Mount St. Helens.)

Many of the cars had trouble with the climb up Mount Hood and Annie wasn't immune. Although I had relocated and insulated the fuel line a week before the tour, Annie suffered mild to moderate symptoms of vapor lock as witnessed by the boiling fuel seen in the glass bowl of her Stromberg carburetor. Letting things cool down by sitting at the side of the road for 5 minutes was enough to allow us to complete the trip.

As we neared Portland on the return trip, I heard a distinct metal “tink” from under the car reflected off a guard rail that we were passing. Then I noted a loss of drive power to the rear wheels. Oh, oh! Coasting to a stop on the shoulder of the road, we found that the right rear hubcap (which retains the drive axle in Annie’s full floating rearend) had gone missing and the axle had disengaged and protruded a couple of inches out from the wheel. The “tink” was likely the disengagement of the interlocking axle/wheel cogs. Although we spent hours on two days looking, we could not find the hubcap. Perhaps it jumped ship many miles before the axle disengaged or was simply hiding under a bush.

As it was starting to get late in the day, we decided to call for a trouble truck. Adding to our concern, all the trucks are engaged helping other stranded motorists and none were available to come to our aid. To complicate matters, the drawbridge on I-5 that we needed to cross to return to our hotel was stuck in the open position and a major traffic jam had resulted. Yikes! Even if we could move, we would just be stalled in traffic.

In desperation I used duct tape from my emergency kit to reconnect the axle not sure that the temporary repair would actually work. We turned the car around and drove the short distance to Salty’s, a delightful local restaurant. Cocktails and dinner at a popular local establishment is not a bad way to weather a breakdown and wait for the epic traffic jam



to clear. Later as darkness fell, we drove the duct-taped car with lights on the several miles to our hotel. Much to my surprise and delight the duct tape held. It did not even hint at failing, neither stretching nor tearing. I guess that Red Green’s faith in the power of duct tape is well placed. (See, for example, the Canadian television comedy series *The Red Green Show* and the low-budget movie *Duct Tape Forever*, 2002.)

**Our third days drive** was over 50 miles and took us to historic Fort Vancouver and lunch at Alderbrook Park. Fort Vancouver was established in the 1824 by the Hudson’s Bay Company and ultimately greatly contributed to American settlement of the Pacific Northwest. At Alderbrook Park cars and drivers participated in several car games, much like the BAHCC Field Meet that we had in July, 2010.

I had spend a restless night after our hubcap troubles from the day before, and I frequently awoke to consider if I should attempt the last days drive with the compromised Kissel. Sometime after midnight I concluded that I should err on the cautious side and not attempt the third days drive.

Yet, when I awake in the morning I felt brave and had a change of heart. Finding a nearby Home Depot with my smart phone, I drive Annie to the hardware store and bought some fresh duct tape (two rolls, one in silver and one in black, plus a roll of tie wire in case I needed something stronger). Several employees poured out of the store into the parking lot to inspect the car and discuss and laugh about the duct-tape repair. After I returned to the tour hotel, I retaped the axle, using the two color tapes to mimic the black hub and silver cap, appealing to my warped sense of being clever.

The third days drive featured steep rolling hills, one or two so steep that I needed to take them in 1<sup>st</sup> gear. I was really worried about it then, but the miracle tape didn’t fail me.

The last seven miles of the day were spent on a limited access highway in Friday afternoon traffic. Wade, my front seat passenger, said we hit 55 MPH according to Annie’s speedometer. This was no mean feat for my little 40-HP car with four, mature, well-fed passengers and her top up. Wade also said that he was mentally reviewing all of the prayers that he learned as a youth. My Jeanne stuck her head out several times to inspect the state of the duct tape. Whether it was the power of prayer or simply the power of duct tape, we arrived safely home without incident. The tape was in perfect condition and did not appear to be the least bit stressed by the day of hard driving.

I have driven Annie around Livermore in the weeks after the Portland tour, still using the duct tape to retain the axle. In the days before the August 13 BAHCC S.A.S (Seeing Alameda Slowly) Tour, I replaced the duct tape with a more substantial steel reinforced 4” rubber coupler and ABS end cap made for sewer lines. While it seems like a somewhat more robust but still temporary repair, it worked just as well as the duct tape for the 70-mile round-trip drive to Alameda from my home.

By the end of the Portland tour, I started telling people that the only reason Kissel used metal hubcaps rather than duct tape to retain the axles on its cars was that duct tape hadn’t been invented, yet.



Ullrich’s 1910 KisselKar



Women in period costumes at Fort Vancouver



Members of the touring party enjoying ice cream



Some of the 92 cars on the tour waiting for a day of “car games” at Alderbrook Park