



Cadillac & LaSalle Club Potomac Region Caddie Chronicle September 2017



THE 2017 GRAND NATIONAL DRIVING TOUR STORY BY TOM MCQUEEN

PHOTOS BY RANDY EDISON, LYNN GARDNER, TOM MCQUEEN AND JOSH PINHO

The kickoff event for this year's CLC Grand National was the Driving Tour of the scenic Virginia countryside. The Tour was co-chaired by me, and Sandy Kemper. This was a tour that took in several sites in the rolling hills and historic areas in the beautiful Loudoun County environs of Northern Virginia west of the host hotel in McLean. The participants met in the north lobby for a brief orientation at 10:00 am. We were pleased to have a large turnout for the tour, with 42 cars and approximately 85 people taking part. This may be a record for a GN driving tour! After the orientation, the cars were placed in six groups of anywhere from four to nine cars total. We were lucky to have some wonderful group leader volunteers: Chuck & Debbie Piel in their '67 Deville Convertible; Randy Edison in his '64 Eldorado Convertible; Earl Rutter in his '74 Talisman; Lynn Gardner in his '76 Eldorado Convertible; Josh Pinho in his '92 Allanté, and Sarah and me in our '75 Eldorado Convertible.

Our first stop was lunch at Clyde's Willow Creek Farm in Broadlands. Clyde's is a well-known Washington area establishment known for its great food and wonderful ambiance. Willow Creek Farm is a rambling series of buildings attached to give the impression of a Colonial era farm house/mansion along with a huge attached "barn wing" along with landscaped patios, etc. Many people commented that it was one of the finest restaurants they'd been to, thanks to the excellent food, service, and lovely spaces.



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After lunch, our group drove on some quiet back roads over to historic Leesburg, Virginia. Leesburg dates back to 1757 and includes many historic structures including the Loudoun County Courthouse, complete with Civil War memorial in the front! Our drive took us through the charming old town area which is filled with buildings almost exclusively from the 18th and 19th centuries.

Unfortunately, time, and parking adequate for 18 foot long vehicles did not allow us to make a stop in old town Leesburg as we headed for our second stop at Breaux Vineyards in Hillsboro, Virginia.

The route taken, Virginia State Route 9, provided a truly beautiful trip down one of Virginia's designated "Scenic Byways." Hillsboro is basically at the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains and only a short distance

from historic Harper's Ferry West Virginia. Breaux provided a perfect venue to enjoy the magnificent views of those foothills, along with the opportunity to do a "VIP Wine Tasting" and tour of the vineyards and winemaking facilities for those who chose to do so. Approximately half of the group did the full tour while the remainder enjoyed a glass of wine or a bottle of water from the terrace overlooking the vineyards.



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Following the vineyard tour, the Tour continued down some other scenic back roads through Hamilton, Virginia on the way to the historic Oatlands Plantation, located south of Leesburg on US Route 15. Route 15 is also designated as a Scenic Byway in Virginia and there are few sites more scenic than the site of Oatlands! Established in the 1790's by one of Virginia's leading families, Oatlands originally encompassed several thousand acres. Despite the passing of time and the ravages of the Civil War, Oatlands was lovingly preserved and restored by the last family to purchase it in the late 1800's. Thankfully, due to cooperation by the original family that owned it during the "War between the States," Oatlands was spared the destruction that befell many of the antebellum plantations during the War.

Now part of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Oatlands staff provided wonderful, insightful tours of the mansion to virtually all of the participants of our tour group. In addition to all the history of the plantation and mansion house, the extensive gardens were a beautiful "peek" into another bygone era enjoyed only by the very wealthy. Happily, thanks to their generosity, Oatlands can now be enjoyed by everyone! Sadly, there were no "barn find" Cadillacs from the early 20th Century lurking in any of the outbuildings!



After the last of the tour-goers was through at Oatlands, several of our tour leaders (Chuck, Randy, Josh and I, along with spouses Sarah and Debbie) and a few of the members of Group #1 headed up to Leesburg for a last hurrah, dinner, and debriefing at the Blue Ridge Grille before heading back down the Dulles Greenway and Toll Road to Tysons. Happily, there were no breakdowns and nobody seems to have gotten lost! A wonderful testament to Cadillacs, and to Sandy's Directions! Despite my normal "worries," the weather was as perfect as possible for August in Virginia with blue skies, temperatures in the low 80's and low humidity! Final thanks also goes to Daniel Jobe and Brian Love, his trouble truck mechanic, who were there for us all day "just in case!" Happily, they were able to enjoy the day and not spend it fixing "naughty" Cadillacs!