

TRIP 4 Healey Rendezvous 2003, Eureka, CA

Day one, Saturday, July 5 - Luggage packed we belt up and drive to the Carpinteria Chevron station to top off the tank and set the trip odometer to zero. As Charlie pumps gas a large moving van parks on the lot and one of two men exits smiling at our Healey with a look of recognition. We encounter this often from former owners. Evoking conversation is part of the fun of traveling. This man's recollection though *was a first*. He says proudly "I used to *steal* Healey's in East Los Angeles!" Elaborating further he explains Healeys have only one VIN number easily removed with a Phillips screwdriver! (The ID tag is mounted on the firewall.) I didn't know how to respond. He scans our Healey affectionately and chuckling goes into the gas station. At 7:25 AM we head north on Rt. 101 in our golf gloves, baseball caps for sun visors and hooded front zipped sweatshirts to keep our hats from blowing away. We pull off at an IHOP in Santa Maria 85 miles later. Charlie worries that the front wheel bearings feel loose. We unpack the boot to get to his wheel hub wrench. Wearing latex gloves he wiggles the wheel and contemplates whether to pursue the long drive to Eureka or return home. A well-dressed couple gazes our way and then the man comes over stating he owns a '69 and '72 XKE and has experience with English cars. Accepting latex gloves he offers assistance. After more conversation he recommends we continue to San Luis Obispo's British Sports Cars where the owner, Peter, could determine the safety of the wheels. Appreciative of his help we pack up and head north the 41 miles. After a brief investigation Peter assures Charlie the bearings are fine. They chat a bit about the cars and we switch sweatshirts for our sun wear: UV protecting shirts, beaked caps with neck capes tucked into our collars. It's now 10:30. We've driven 115 miles. Next stop is Santa Margarita for gas. The temperature is 106. No restrooms at the station so we go to a near by park where a barbeque is underway. Our sun outfits and car create attention. At King City we take a soda and shade break. After 240 miles 6 1/3 hours, 4 of them driving, we stop for the night at Salina's Vagabond Inn. We cover the car and select chilburgers from the tempting menu at Margie's Diner, a 50's café. The motel is next to the most popular gas station in Salinas because of its lowest price, creating a never-ending line of cars anxiously waiting their turn. They are open 24/7. We retire anticipating the fun of joining our Healey friends again for a few days in Eureka.

Day two, Sunday, July 6 – Charlie got gas as soon as he was awake before the lines built up. I use a notebook to help organize my paperwork in the open cockpit. Charlie prints maps from the computer to guide us on our trips. We left Salinas at 8:00 AM and arrived in Palo Alto at 9:30 to the home of friends Janice and John where we were treated to a fine home cooked breakfast. We arrived without difficulty using our custom maps. Janice is the daughter of our neighbor who helped us out by lending Charlie the use of her garage when he began the BN-1 restoration. He spent many hours there dismantling and cleaning Healey parts. They had seen the Healey in its early stages when it looked an overwhelming task to restore. Showing them the results of BLU HLY was fun. After filling the tank we continued north on Rts. 280 and 1. The fog was thick the temperature cool as we approached the ocean. We pulled over to layer a sweatshirt over the solar gear, the first time we wore this combination. The effect was almost the same as wearing our nylon-hooded windbreakers that reverse to a sweatshirt side. In the past we have worn the jackets nylon side out. When traveling the wind flutters the fabric creating an irritating rustle we accepted in exchange for the needed warmth. We discovered by reversing the jackets to knit side out voila a quiet ride!

Driving or navigating in large cities makes me nervous. We're almost to San Francisco. Rt. 1 becomes 19th Ave. though Golden Gate Park and heavy city traffic on Presidio Blvd. A lot of stop and go, changing gears and acknowledging lookyloos. The bridge was veiled in fog. We wanted to pull off, once across, to photograph the car with the Golden Gate Bridge as a back drop, but the exit lane was full and backed up so we continued into Marin County on 101 again. The traffic coming south on 101 into San Fran was heavy and slow with weekenders returning after a 4th get-a-way. We arrived at Rohnert Park so early in the afternoon that we cancelled our reservation at the Best Western, got gas and had lunch at an IHOP where the young employees saw their first Austin Healey. We tried to contact the Keens, to let them know of our change in plans. They and Lou Galper from the San Diego Club were caravanning to Eureka in two long days instead of the three shorter days of travel we allotted. Tom and George talked Sharon Tanihara and her friend Wally Uyehara into continuing from Monterey all the way to the Rendezvous. Wanting to surprise us that night they drove long and hard to reach Rohnert Park, but we were gone! We continued to Ukiah for the night traveling 228 miles in 4 hours 40 minutes driving time. We had spaghetti at a forgettable Henney Penney's and then took a walk around town in the summer heat. The room and bed were nice so we slept well.

Day 3, Monday, July 7 – Up early we topped off the tank and had breakfast at IHOP just before the night/morning shift change and had to wait on our waiter as he continued chatting with another customer. We were on our way by 8:50 AM traveling 169 miles to Eureka. The weather continued hot on the inland drive of the Redwood Highway. At Leggett we gas up again. Now the road begins to twist, as we get higher in elevation into hills and pines. The weather turns cold. We pull off to the shoulder and put on our sweatshirts and jackets. Charlie keeps a large towel and 2 clothespins in the trunk to protect the fender when he works on the engine. We fashion up a lap cover for both of us, clipping the towel to the dash with the clothespins. The heater is open full blast. The towel directs the heat on our legs and it really helps. I have also tied a bandana around my face, like a bandit. Before our trip to Yosemite in October I'll make a better lap robe. We exit onto Rt. 254, a small alternate road paralleling 101 through Humboldt Redwoods state Park along the Avenue of the Giants. In the green glow of the dense woods and magnificent redwoods we stop for lunch at a 5-table café The Eternal Tree House in Redcrest. Most of the tables are occupied. We have some yummy pancakes as large as the dinner plate. It is a fun and chatty place. All menu selections are made from scratch and generous. There is a couple on a motorcycle trip from Yaak, Montana, a town so small they don't all have electricity. The parents share the responsibilities of the one room schoolhouse. Another customer arrives on his vintage tractor. Relaxed and inspired in this beautiful setting we reap the reward of all the freeway travel to get here and proceed on to Eureka in our favorite car on roads it was designed for, intimate and memorable in an open roadster. We soon see Humboldt Bay. It starts raining, but we're almost there and it doesn't continue. Eureka's Red Lion Inn is on the north side of town one block west of Rt. 101. It is obvious we're in the right place. The parking lot is filled with Healeys from CA, OR, WA and BC. There will be a hundred by nightfall. We check in and eagerly await the arrival of Tom, George, Sharon, Wally, and Lou. They pull in one after the other and we exchange greetings. At a 5 PM mixer with the other Healey Clubs we enjoy appetizers and conversation. From Ann Camito, a former history teacher, I started a great book list of which I've already enjoyed several checked out from the library. From among the members of our Southern CA Austin Healey Club at the Rendezvous we frequently joined

George and Tom Keens, Sharon, Wally, Ralph and Ann Camito. Charlie requested the hotel's courtesy van to drive us for dinner to the Samoa Cookhouse over the bridge by the ocean taking a friend in Oxnard's recommendation. Unfortunately Sharon's car, the oldest Healey at the meet, had a serious puddle of gasoline forming underneath. She and Wally stayed behind and with the aid of many willing qualified fellow owners the problem was solved. The food at this lumber camp style restaurant is family style with a preset menu for each day. The food was fine, the company better.

Day 4, Tuesday, July 8 – Charlie and I skip out of the big three-part guided tour of Victorian Ferndale on picturesque Mattole Road, continuing to the shore and through Humboldt Redwood Park, and the Avenue of the Giants scheduled for 8:30 AM. We drove though the Giants Monday on the way up and would return to the small Redcrest café today for another great breakfast. This time we ordered the Lumberjack Special and converse with other customers. Noticing my Syracuse sweatshirt the pair across from us inquires where we are from. A Syracuse native also he lived on Euclid Ave. and went to the same elementary, junior and senior high schools as I did, although several year later. We all went to Syracuse University. Lovely weather; we stay on the Giant Ave. paved on a course dictated by the majestic trees. On a whim we take the turn off to Holmes, a small hamlet. We can see through the trees that one road takes a steep drop to a stream with a bridge crossing over. The Healey idles as we debate if we'll have clearance to continue. A sleeping dog nearby wakes up alarmed and starts barking defensively. We decide *not* to walk down to check out the bridge and put the car into gear retracing our way. About to make a second turn which would take us on the entrance / exit road to town we see a boy on an ATV. He pulls off the road to allow us right of way. Greeting him he responds asking "Will you follow me to my Grandfather's so he can see your car?" Sure, we follow him past just a few houses where his granddad was about to leave in his truck. They come over and we have a great time talking with David Griffith and his family who happen to be car enthusiasts too. In the large four-car garage his son-in-law had a restored '57 Chevy, Corvette, and another Chevy set up for the drags. We tell them about the rendezvous in Eureka and all the Healeys congregated for the event. Mentioning we'll be headed for the San Joaquin Valley on our way home he recommends we skip Rt. 299 and take Rt. 36, a scenic more remote drive to Rt. 5. There won't be many opportunities for gas or food. "Get gas at Dinsmore Gas & Hardware and stop at the Burger Bar in Mad River for lunch." Flourishing flower gardens, their dog (skunked the other day), a goose, goats and cows in the pasture make it an ideal farm. We head back to Eureka on local roads wandering through Hydesville. We had our own fun and spontaneous tour. We gas up in Eureka then drive through Old Town seeing many charming Victorian homes small and large including the Carson Mansion which is so heavily ginger breaded that it sets a record. It must keep a significant maintenance crew permanently employed. 2nd Street is quaintly paved and has nice storefronts. Back at the hotel there are cars to admire and Healeyites to talk with in the parking lot any time of day. For dinner we 8 meet at Roys Italian Restaurant. The Keens drove while the rest of us walked, a nice stroll from the Red Lion Inn. We all share our day's various happenings. Our bed is rock hard and I don't sleep well.

Day 5, Wednesday, July 9 – This day begins with Charlie taking the car to Eureka Brake & Automotive, a block behind the hotel, for an 'on the car' spin balance of the wheels. Charlie noticed it provided a smoother ride. Then we walk across the street to The Chalet

with the Camitos for a nice breakfast. I chose blueberry waffles and Charlie blueberry pancakes. We bypassed the scheduled Rally-in-the-Redwoods, but go to the Fairgrounds to watch the autocross. We arrived too late as it was just ending. We eight then fell in line in our four Healeys for a drive north on 101, not a freeway anymore just a two-way road, to Redwood National Park. We took a short break at the State Park Information Center then continued north. At lunchtime fearing we'd find nothing better we pulled off at hokey shop with minimal food selection just before Orick. After eating we took photos with our heads poked through some humorously painted plywood wildlife scenarios. Charlie and I, driving last in line, lost sight of the others. We drove into Elk Meadow on Davison Rd. where we all had discussed Roosevelt elk might be sighted. We saw a doe but no Healeys. Not venturing further on the gravel road we turned around. Back on Rt. 101 Charlie decided to take the next exit. Thankfully Sharon and Wally were waiting for us at the bottom of the ramp where we then took a left turn onto Newton B. Drury Scenic Parkway, our destination. Having beautiful weather it was spectacular to be in another pocket of protected Redwoods. Just meandering along the narrow road, heads tilted back to capture the heights and sights we followed the leader. In time the Camitos pulled off at an abbreviated "T" intersection only long enough for us to stage our cars for a photo op. It was once a logging road now intentionally returned to nature. Just as we were adjusting our cameras Tom hailed a passing trio of motorcyclists. Parking their fine bikes they gladly snapped our cameras in succession while we stood by our Healeys. Then a couple on bicycles arrived and halted to admire the cars. Dismounting, the husband went over to have his wife take his picture. I offered to take some for them. This became a delightful interlude as we travelers, all by different modes of transportation related our journeys. The 3 motorcyclists from Ottawa, Canada were doing a month tour of the U.S. returning by a more southern route. The bicyclists were from England and had been living in Canada for two years. Tired of their jobs, big city living and before they have children they sold their home and most of their possessions to purchase these bikes and traveling gear and were on a trek to the tip of Chile! They will fly over some of Central America for safety then resume their adventure by bike. I told them of our neighbor that had accomplished that same objective solo, peddling the whole way through jungles and deserts. They said they were delighted with the friendliness of Americans and were having a fantastic trip. A little more mingling and we all got back in our seats and set off. I find the most memorable capsules of these Healey trips to be the serendipity usually found on smaller roads where contact with others is more likely and intimate. We soon headed for Eureka and this night we made an excellent selection and had a wonderful meal and a lot of fun at the Eureka Sea Grill again walking to Old Town after covering the car. Charlie and I had halibut and I a yummy piece of cake. An auction and event awards started at 7 PM at the hotel. Charlie and I slipped in after dinner. Charlie donated some memorabilia and it was fun to watch as it was bid. We both agreed it was a great day as we went upstairs for bed.

Day 6, Thursday, July 10 – Ralph, Ann, Charlie and I breakfast again at The Chalet. Anne's walnut pancake looked so good I wished I'd ordered the same. I had French toast and Charlie the blueberry waffle. A garden hose was available in the parking lot for washing cars and we take turns in preparation for the Popular Car Show scheduled for 10 AM at Patrick's Point Park, north about half the distance we drove yesterday. We find that directions within the park to Red Alder Grove are scantily posted. We bottom out on a grassy hump created by a tree root as we are directed to line up by model. I hope no one had

damage to their Healeys undercarriage. This bump should have been coned off, for avoidance. There weren't too many 100/4's, eight. Tom was campaigning votes for his father. George is an original owner with an original condition car. Most cars have been modified to some degree, some drastically. One man in order to gain a few more points to near perfection for the Concours judging switched wheels with another car since his stainless spokes weren't authentic. He tried to accomplish the changeover as unobtrusively as he could. Afterwards the wheels were swapped back to the loaner. Charlie and I aren't as psyched to compete as we were our first year. We mostly enjoy traveling in our 'driver'. I took this opportunity to observe the differences between models. I started with the earlier years advancing to the latest also noticing how owners equipped and stowed possessions, hoping for creative ideas for us. Uneducated about technical specs I have my own criteria for casting a vote, including if the bonnet and boot are raised, showing the entire car. Lunch was a catered buffet, but not worthy of second helpings. Charlie and I headed back to Eureka before the awards and ahead of the crowd. Tom and George were pleased with the third place trophy in the BN1/2 class. We 8 unanimously voted to return to the Sea Grill. We spent our last night together seated at the same table we had last night. We repeated the halibut it was so good. George and Tom joined us for the walk back. We changed pace and varied whom we chatted with along the way. Bringing up the rear Charlie began conversation with a retired couple also on a walk. They have two homes, a place in Eureka for summers when Palm Springs is too hot. Charlie mentioned the good WWII Palm Springs Air Museum we'd visited in '95. The fellow said it wasn't *that* good because it didn't have a PB, (Catalina) he'd flown in the war. After walking back to the hotel Charlie and I drove to the Carson Mansion and parked in front for a souvenir photo. At the Red Lion Inn we said goodnight and safe journey to our friends including the Albecks and Dohertys, some of whom would be starting on the return trip home earlier than us. Hopefully we will be together again for the October Yosemite trip. These Club events are sure is a great way to get better acquainted with nice people and California.

Day 7, Friday, July 11 – Charlie and I eat at The Chalet again. It is our waitress's first day having been promoted from bus girl. An adjustment for correct change was necessary for the embarrassed young waitress. Our trip odometer reads 909 miles. We set off at 10:15 AM south on Rt. 101 to Hydesville, the western beginning of Rt. 36. Soon we are beyond the village and are in the Trinity National Forest. It's another beautiful drive on a two-lane road. Actually there are some stretches and turns narrower than the basic 24' two-lane road so the centerline is lost and has just outside painted edges. We see logging and other large trucks. Caution and defensive driving are a must for safety. We pass Grizzly Creek Redwoods State Park, and do get gas at the Dinsmore. The restroom is basic, but appreciated. We stop at the Burger Bar in Mad River, 3200', population 35. The Burger Bar is a small trailer, well stocked and organized with a fine selection and good food. It was fun talking with other customers as we sat at a picnic table waiting for and then having lunch. Of course our solar wear and car parked nearby made conversation easy. Driving among the big trees on the tight curves without much traffic Charlie said "Wow this is a drive for a Healey!" Once out of the forest we felt the heat, the vegetation became summer bleached and we looked forward to reaching Rt. 5 so we could make better time. I'm glad we took route 36. It will be one of the images I will remember for years to come and remind me of the great sights included on our Eureka trip. We climbed in elevation approaching Red Bluff. First stop a gas station. We wet down

our hats and sun shirts in the restroom as we'd learned to do last summer on our Arizona trip. It is important to keep cool and hydrated in the desert. It was *really* hot, over 100 degrees. We took a Best Western in Dunnigan, north of Sacramento. We walked to a diner close by for dinner and Charlie filled the gas tank. I set up the room, washed my face and crawled into bed. It was comfortable and I fell asleep in a moment. We slept well. We traveled 251 miles, elapsed time 7 1/3 hours.

Day 8, Saturday, July 12 – We're glad it's the weekend when we pass through Sacramento avoiding workday commuter traffic. It still confuses us some. Big cities, ugh. We transfer to Rt. 99 on to Turlock where we visit Tom Watling from whom we purchased our Healey in February '96. Charlie has continued to communicate with him especially once the car was completed. Well it's never really completed because there is always another innovation to incorporate and maintenance is ongoing. Tom has a great place, a former schoolhouse converted to a home. Prior owners ran an antique business there. There are a few extra buildings. One contains his car collection. His father also has a fascination with cars and began collecting long before Tom started. We admired his select cars such as Franklins, Packards, a gull wing MB, and various memorabilia. I'm sure it was fun for him to see our beautiful Healey and that we enjoy it so much. That was a hilite of the trip. It was a very hot drive and we cooled off often, wetting ourselves by pouring water over our heads and torsos at the gas station in Fresno. We traveled to Visalia where we spent the evening with some friends.

Day 9, Sunday, July 13 – Our last day and we are anxious to avoid the heat of the Valley. We are on our way at 6 AM. We ate a senior breakfast at Denny's in Lebec, at the base of the Grapevine. The car seemed to hesitate some, but we climb fine and before long we are on our local roads. It remains hot until we see a welcome fog as we approach Ventura. This trip totaled 1640 miles.

Epilog – wondering why the car had little power especially climbing, Charlie looked over the engine the next day. Checking the carburetors, plugs, timing, he finally discovered that the plug wires in the distributor cap were arcing and causing an intermittent miss. After changing the cap and installing new wires the problem was solved. We look forward to gathering in October in Yosemite when the club has it's 2nd Annual Healeys on Tour.

Happy motoring, Carol and Charlie

