

Wawona Lodge, Yosemite 2nd Annual Healeys on Tour

10/24/03 - 10/26/03

TRIP 5

Eight Healeys participated in the autumn tour:

Carol & Charlie Hart, Gloria & Don Fisher, Shirley & Jim Albeck, Don & Cathy Newman, George & Tom Keens, Bob Baron & his friend Fred, Jeanette & Gil Daab and Ann & Ralph Comito



Saturday morning before we set out for the Yosemite Valley and lunch at the Ahwahnee. Photo taken by Paul and Dianne Zimmerman. He was past president of the Cincinnati, OH Austin Healey Club. They had a 1960 BT7. We lucked out having such a willing and patient couple take photos for us, with all of our individual cameras!

Thank you to Bob and Gloria Baron for arranging this years tour. We missed Gloria but understand the major effort necessary to settle into a new home. The weather was perfect! The Park's deciduous vegetation was in yellows and soft rusts. The Lodge, built in 1875, is Victorian décor where the lobbies, dining room and veranda offer comfortable seating for socializing. Evenings, Tom Bopp plays the piano and sings a period medley. Food was good but best of all, of course, was the time we got to spend chatting with each other and touring the National Park in our Healeys. Charlie and I were offered a chance to wash our car which nearly lost us the opportunity to be in the photo above. We were late again as the club started for the Valley. Trying to catch up we bypassed them at Bridalveil Falls, even though great efforts of waving & whistles were made to catch our attention. After lunch we posed for souvenir photos at Tunnel View with our Healeys, El Capitan and Half Dome in the background. Glacier Point Road's tight curves made classic Healeying fun. It was a great time and we're ready for next years event.

BLU HLY - the sights, new territory, good memories

Charlie & Carol's
October trip

10/23/03
TO
10/28/03

Day one Thursday, 10/23– Now accustomed to traveling in the Healey we easily stow our gear. Prepared for fluctuations in temperature the boot is packed with a selection of jackets. First we visit a neighbor, then drive to Carpinteria State Park where we have made friends with a feral cat adopted by the camp hosts several years ago. We frequently walk the park and take time to pet "Mama Kitty". At 9:40 AM we're on our way, just to Bakersfield. It was 94° in Fillmore but the San Joaquin Valley at 80° felt perfect with the windchill factored in. We had a pleasant dinner with long time friends and also Ralph and Ann Comito at Benji's Basque restaurant, around the corner from the Best Western. Accommodations are nice and we have a good nights rest.

Destinations

- Day one- Thursday, Carpinteria to Bakersfield, 139 miles
- Day two- Friday, Bakersfield to Wawona Hotel, Yosemite, 168 miles
- Day three- Yosemite Valley and Glacier Point, 68 miles
- Day four- Wawona to Tonopah, NV, 225 miles
- Day five- Tonopah to Pahrump, NV, 165 miles
- Day six- Pahrump, to Carpinteria, 351 miles
- Total miles 1116

Day two Friday, 10/24 - In the morning the Camitos and we breakfast at Denney's. We're on the road by 10:00 AM to avoid a potentially hot day, even though a Club break is planned at Rosemary's Creamery. At Fresno we take 41N. The terrain changes into scrub oak as we climb into the foothills. Just before we reach Oakhurst we can smell and see pines. Ann and Ralph hope to eat at 3 Sisters but we are a minute too late, 1:31 PM, and they won't serve us. We try Oka, a Japanese Restaurant. It is clean, nicely decorated, the food is delicious and the service good. Elevation is 3400' as we enter the Sierra National Forest, temperature 87.

Just 4 miles from the south Park entrance we see the Wawona. The Daabs are on the upstairs balcony, the Newmans have just arrived. We follow the Camitos on the drive around the fountain in front of the Lodge entrance, elevation 4000'. Our room is in the two story Moore Cottage behind the original Hotel. Ceilings must be 12' high in our charming room. We are fortunate to have one of the two private baths in this cottage of nine rooms. The other seven share a shower and restroom on the back porches, each level. Of the 104 rooms at the Wawona 50 have private bathrooms, the rest central facilities. As one of the oldest mountain resort hotels in California this National Historical Landmark maintains it's old-fashioned hospitality offered in a bygone era. I'm glad I didn't need to relive the past in the brisk night air.

The evening is delightful and the wicker chairs on the veranda accommodate us all. Soon we are enjoying the hospitality of the dining room. We plan for a group photo in the morning. I need not have worried about bears. We saw none and were careful not to carry scented items, which attract them.

Day three Saturday, 10/25 – We and the Keens had the breakfast buffet, then got ready for the photo op. We took Wawona Road through the tunnel at Inspiration Point to Yosemite Valley. South side Drive took us past impressive El Capitan, campers, bikers, and hikers. Once we found a parking place, at the Ahwahnee, Charlie smelled gas. Lifting the bonnet he discovered the banjos at the carburetor inlet leaked, squirting a fine stream when the ignition was on. He pulled the spare tire out to access his custom shaped tool kit, designed to fit in the cavity of the tire hub. Fortunately he had the exact wrench needed. Our gas mileage probably improved after that adjustment. The Ahwahnee is a spectacular Hotel and we all splurged on lunch. Returning on Northside Drive we stopped at Tunnel View to pose for pictures. Next we took Glacier Point Road to *magnificent* views and snapped photos along with tourists from many countries. In the Geology Hut, built in 1925, there is an excellent educational depiction of how the glacier carved the canyon and rounded the mountains. It made me more awestruck of this special place. Back at the Wawona Charlie and I chose a light dinner and later relaxed on the porch with the rest of the group for our last evening. We slept well and planned for an early departure in the morning.



Many people commented on and enjoyed our Healeys traveling through the park this weekend



El Capitan, Half Dome from Tunnel View



A view from Glacier Point

Day 4 Once we picked up Big Oak Flat Road ,Charlie and I were in new territory.

Sunday, 10/26—It was 37 outside. We met Bob Baron in the Lobby where complimentary coffee was ready, a nice fire blazing in the fireplace. This was the morning to begin Standard time. An employee told me the cook forgot to change his clock and, although the dining room doesn't open until 7, he had prepared breakfast at Daylight Savings time, an hour too early! We bundled up in our heavy jackets, hoods and gloves and were traveling by 6:30 AM. We retraced some of yesterdays route traveling north into the Valley. I thought about the two climbers we saw climbing El Capitan. They must have slept suspended overnight to continue their ascent today. Heading west to Crane Flat, 6200', and then east on route 120 we had the pavement to ourselves. Morning light filtered through the trees and shone on the creeks. It was beautiful. I really prefer isolated secondary roads in the Healey, traveling at our own pace, with no large SUV, camper or truck obscuring our view or influencing our speed. The temperature rose to 55 by 7AM. We still kept the heater on.



Tioga Lake

We visited Yosemite 30 years ago but had only seen the Valley and Glacier Point. Tioga Road is breathtakingly beautiful. At 9945' Tioga Pass Entrance is the highest mountain pass in California. Our car has never been so high! It ran well without spark plug trouble. Once outside the Park the terrain changed, more rock, less vegetation, but the bright yellow aspens as we descended, in third gear, in the Inyo National Forest were wonderful. We stopped at Lee Vining to have breakfast at Mobil's Whoa Nellie Deli, by Mono Lake. Servings were so generous it was sufficient until dinner. A few minutes on 395 S and we're back to 120 E to Benton where Rt. 6 takes us into Nevada and Tonopah, our destination for tonight. This stretch of 120 was perfumed with desert flowers, and the dips and rises in the road were like being on an amusement ride, catching your stomach as you swooped down again. Dry lake beds, cattle grates, and swing gates for winter closures made this an unusual treat, a road seldom taken and not forgotten. Susquin Summit was 8139', Montgomery Pass 7167'. This whole day we are at high elevations 6000' or greater, the temperature comfortable at 70. Tonopah on a Sunday is nearly closed down. It is about 3/4s out of business anyhow. We checked into an excellent Best Western and then walked the town. In 1900 silver was first discovered here in Nevada creating a boomtown. Evidence of those finer days and historic structures are sadly evident in abandoned hotels and casinos. We were lucky the gas station had a pizza stand. It was a good day on the road.

Day 5 Monday, 10/27—This Best Western had a great spread for breakfast. We don't have a long trip today, just heading to Pahrump to visit our friend who recently moved there. I return to the room to pack up and Charlie goes outside to remove the car and cockpit covers. Soon, ready to check out and wheeling the luggage, I see Charlie carrying a very flat tire on his hip! A car jack is supporting the right back axle. While Charlie seeks a tire shop three men standing in front of the motel said "Small problem?" To them it was. They were all driving fifth wheels which broke down in Tonopah, days ago. The man from Louisiana just hired a lo-boy trailer to haul him home. His transmission gave out. A man from Illinois headed to Modesto to see family waited 8 hours to get towed to town and was impatiently anticipating parts to arrive at a garage where labor prices are exorbitant. He'll travel the way we just came on 120 through Yosemite, where he worked for 17 years. The couple and their two German Shepard dogs were also waiting for parts and will then continue to Reno. They all agreed this is not the best town to be struck in. Goodyear found a 2" screw imbedded from the tread to the side wall. With no replacement tire available they patch the flat and install an inner tube. This repair will get us on the road for now. We pulled up to wish the 5th wheelers good luck once we were ready to roll. We took 95 S stopping at Beatty for gas and coffee at the Stagecoach Casino, not much to be found on this stretch of 2 lane undivided road. We chatted with three officers in the Café, who arrived after us. It turns out they sheltered our car in the parking lot, improving our frequent choice of parking diagonally across two spaces. Continuing on we turned on 160 S into Pahrump where we did get the new tire we needed. Our drive, not far from and parallel to Death Valley, had fair temperatures in the low 90's today, unlike much of the year where national highs are often recorded. This is another town best to be passing through. Visiting with our friend was worth the Nevada detour on our way home. Besides I like to travel through new areas of our country, so large and variable.



STAGECOACH CASINO, BEATTY,NV

Headed for home

Day 6 Tuesday, 10/28—This will be a long day on the road covering more distance than we usually choose to do in one day. We called our next door neighbors last night to see what the California wild fire situation is. The reports on TV last night in Nevada weren't that clear on road closures. We don't want to get stuck at a crawling pace in LA traffic. That could overheat the radiator. There were no TVs at Yosemite and we don't have a car radio so we feel a bit out of touch with this multi-located disaster. They said Rt. 126 was closed yesterday for some time but should be open today. That is our preferred route. We shower, pack and are at Mom's Diner just before 7AM. The employees at the restaurant see us sitting in the car bundled up waiting for opening time, a few minutes away. They invite us in early to get warm and several of them eagerly come out to get a better look at the pretty blue Healey. Our friend joins us there for a quick, but good breakfast. The waitress even offered to make us sandwiches-to-go for our journey back. They were very thoughtful and pleasant there. Then we're on our way headed for home by routes 372 S, which becomes 178 at the California border, 127 S to Baker taking 15 W to Barstow, 58 W to Mojave, 14 S to 5 N just before Santa Clarita, 126 W and finally 101 N. The first stretch of the ride is open spaces with a little activity around Shoshone, no traffic to interrupt our progress. On Rt. 15 we could see great clouds of smoke rising and drifting west with the winds from the San Bernardino area. The intensity became more evident as we continued west. Rt. 58 was a better choice than staying on the 15 to the Pearblossom Highway, which would be closer to the fires and is a dangerous road anyhow. The Piru fire also appeared over the hills rosy red with heat. The temperature was 100 in Santa Clarita. The fire had burned down to the shoulder at the beginning of 126 and it smelled freshly charred. We were tired but happy when we arrived home. As usual we had a wonderful time in the roadster. Of all of the hobbies Charlie has had over the years I'm voting his restoration of this BN1 as my favorite.

