

## Coast-to-Coast

English car club impressed with United States



Vince Leek inspects carburetor parts from his 1930 Austin "Chummy" touring car. Leek and four others from Great Britain are driving their 1930s-era Austins the length of Route 66. Leek had his Chummy up and running in a matter of minutes after blowing some debris out of the carburetor parts and reinstalling them. [Photo by John A. Bowersmith/Independent]

By Jim Maniaci  
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GRANTS — Image driving all across America from the Atlantic Ocean in the northeast to the Pacific Ocean in the southwest with only a seven horsepower motor to power your car. And doing it with cars built before World War II!

This is exactly what some members of the 750 Motor Club's members are doing, including an overnight stop in Grants on Wednesday as they journey the entire 2,450 miles or as much of it as remains of historic Route 66, which has been called "America's Main Street" and "The Mother Road."

After cleaning up a bit at the Days Inn, the 11 intrepid drivers (including two in the modern chase van) drove to the downtown Uranium Cafe where the Grants-Cibola County Chamber of Commerce treated them to dinner. And the visits continued Thursday, according to the cafe staff, with more English people stopping to eat, saying they are following about a day behind the principal entourage.

And such Yankee hospitality is not that unusual, a member of the group said.

Wendy Hider of Swindon, Wilts, commented, "We've been

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struck by the hospitality. It's brilliant."

Added Vince Leek of Warminster, Wilts, "The courtesy of drivers is amazing. The lorries (trucks) are very courteous," with the drivers waving. He called the experience "absolutely fantastic."

Even the freight and passenger trains toot their horns when they see the caravan of tiny two-seat vintage cars which the group drove from New York City to Chicago just to get onto Route 66 at Lake Michigan.

Leek and Veronica Garside both noted the sculptures on the buildings in Santa Fe, contrasting it to what they labeled the "terribly sad (situation) of so many (businesses) put out of business" because of the high-speed Interstate system.

He observed that "some stretches (of 66) are as good as any highway; some are not so good. We've gone on all the rough stretches," in vehicles which push to average 45 mph, compared to the 75 mph on most of Interstate 40, which parallels much of 66 in Cibola and McKinley counties.

The group is pushing somewhat, the co-organizer of this year's jaunt indicated, because they have to be in Santa Monica, Calif., the Pacific Ocean terminus of the famed highway, by Sept. 21. After Grants, their next overnight stop was to be in Holbrook, Ariz. With disdain, he indicated "we only go on the interstate when there is no alternative."

Before they get to see the sun setting on the ocean's horizon, they have seen already viewed what Hider called "the wonderful experience with scenery which is just, wow!"

Fellow co-organizer Ken Cooke of Stevenage, Hertfordshire, said crossing the Atlantic and motoring across America does tire one as, "It has been quite hectic."

He credits Diana Garside, a North Carolina resident, with instigating this year's event. This year marks the 60th anniversary of a guide book on Route 66 written by Jack Rittenhouse in 1946 after he drove a 1939 Bantam on Route 66. She and her mother, Veronica, set up the trip in memory of their father and husband, Dan Garside, who never got to make the trip.

All the cars this group included models built in 1929, 1930, 1932, 1934 and 1938 are known as "Sevens" because of their horsepower. The club, founded in 1939, the year World War II began, takes its name from the 750 cubic centimeter engines powering the diminutive cars.

Cooke said Diana Garside could get only three weeks off work, so the group is under a time constraint, although

there is a tiny bit of "elasticity" in the itinerary.

Reflecting on being pleasantly surprised at how they have been treated by everyone, Cooke commented, "Route 66 is not just the road; it's not just the sights. It's the people. We've sure met some characters! And we've sure met some really kind people."

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