

## **A Week On Motorloway – Lets Go Kill Some Bugs**

“We may be lost, but we’re making great time,” I told LuAnn several times while driving last week.

The first week of every October, we drive 1000 miles around Iowa with up to 150 other classic car owners in a rally called Motorloway. It’s kind of like RAGBRAI, except with motels and without the exercise. Its unofficial motto is “Let’s go kill some bugs.”

We are given a route with printed instructions that we are to follow, but they may as well be written in Sanskrit. At one point on the tour we were sitting at a four-way stop frowning at the map when Motorloway participants pulled up from each of the other three directions. We were all supposed to be following the same route.

Only a few people from Johnson County were on the tour, including Curt and Susan Moore in an old yellow and white VW bus. Those things have engines smaller than a self-respecting motorcycle, having less than 50 horsepower. Coupled with the aerodynamics of a brick, that is a vehicle you don’t want to be stuck behind – even on level pavement – particularly if there is a stiff headwind.

Bill and Carol Winetraub from Cedar Rapids were along again in their (his) 1967 Firebird 400. Bill is a photo nut whose camera can rapid-fire \$5 of film per second. He often stands at the side of the road shooting each car as it motors by.

One day he chose to stand at the entrance of a wind farm interpretive center near Clear Lake. The first two cars zoomed by, decided they wanted to visit the wind generating display, stopped on the highway and started backing up.

Meanwhile, here come the rest of the Motorloway cars, their drivers all smiling and waving at Bill on the side of the road, oblivious to the cars backing up in front of them. Despite much squealing of tires and flirtations with a rather deep ditch, nobody crashed.

One vehicle that comes every year – like it or not - is a 1966 Ford truck carrying a calliope. A calliope is a small organ (fitted with shrill whistles) that can play from a keyboard, or - in this case - from a paper roll like a player piano.

For most people, a little calliope music goes a long way. This thing seemed to play the same ten tunes, over and over at about 110 decibels, every waking hour. During one lunch stop, it got stuck and played the same four measures of Beer Barrel Polka for 20 minutes until someone on the verge of insanity yanked the spark plug wire on the portable generator supplying the power.

I haven't followed much of the current debate about torture and interrogation techniques, but I am confident that a terrorist chained to the bumper of this infernal machine would be begging to tell everything he knows within an hour.

One evening, we were at a restaurant with three other couples chatting about previous trips. One of the cars on last year's tour was a small NSU convertible, the first Wankel (rotary) engine vehicle ever manufactured.

One of the women asked in all sincerity, "Is that guy with the little Wankel along with us again this year?" She didn't understand why several of us thought that was funny. I told her that he didn't sign up this year – he probably got tired of being referred to that way.

As you might expect on a tour of antique cars, there were plenty of mechanical problems. One of the Studebakers developed an alarming buzz that the usual experts couldn't diagnose. When the noise persisted after then engine was shut off, they eventually discovered that an electric razor in a piece of luggage had somehow turned itself on and was vibrating against something in the trunk.

A certain amount of wife-swapping occurs every year, and one morning LuAnn (1969 Jaguar XKE) and Angie (1950 Ford fire truck) found themselves in the rumble seat of a 1934 Model A roadster. In an amusing display of

back-seat driving, they were shouting route directions to Ron (the owner/driver), who had to turn his head to hear over the wind. Unfortunately, his neck was somehow connected to his arms and he dropped at least two wheels off the road every time he received new instructions.

Motorloway started in 1996 as a one-time tour that was part of Iowa's official sesquicentennial celebration. It was so popular that it became an annual event. If you own a pre-1982 vehicle and want to get in on next-year's fun (there's also a 500-mile tour in June), you can go to [www.motormemories.com](http://www.motormemories.com) and sign up.