



## *A JOURNAL of Sherman's March to the Sea Caravan*

Led by JeanAnn and Bill  
Miller and Janet and Russ  
Payne  
April 1-16, 2005

**By: Bonnie S. Ledbetter**

True to rally tradition, if you arrive on time, you are two days late, Monacos in Motion caravaners on Sherman's March to the Sea began to gather at the Holiday Trav-L-Park near Chattanooga by March 30, 2005 with at least ten campers settled in. Due to heavy rains, some campers had waterfront sites. Those who participated in the caravan were: Les and Wilma Jean Alexander, Bob and JoAnn Fish, John and Rita Ham, Stan

and Barbara Jones, Karl and Bobbie Koch, Bill and Bonnie Ledbetter, Joe and Bee Luippold, Homer and Lady Dell Martin, Art and Susan Martire, Wayne and Barbara McCray, Bill and JeanAnn Miller, Janet and Russ Payne, E. J. and Bettyann Poindexter, Henry Snyder and Marcia Winters, Charlie and Linda Utz, Fred and Dee vonRecklinghausen, Terry and Donna Walters and Wilbur and Clara Webb.

By dinner on Friday, April 1, the first official event of the caravan, all eighteen coaches had assembled. Janet and Russ Payne began their two week marathon of cooking for thirty-six. Following a spaghetti feast, the evening's entertainment consisted of the

horror stories that three members experienced on their way to Chattanooga. Stan and Barbara Jones' fuel pump failed, requiring their new Exec be hauled in for repair. As they followed the flatbed in their jeep, a blowout on the flatbed showered them with pieces of tire. Fortunately, their coach did not topple off the flatbed. EJ and Bettyann Poindexter suffered a \$600 repair on a leaky faucet which soaked a good portion of their lower cabinets. Wilbur and Clara Webb had the most harrowing tale of all. Their tow vehicle was badly damaged by being rear ended and they are now being sued by the driver who hit them.

Our first full day of activities began on Saturday, April 2 with a visit to the Chattanooga Aquarium. The Aquarium featured an exhibit of the most exotic seahorses we had ever seen. They demonstrated that Mother Nature has a sense of humor as well as a startling imagination. A six story ramp led us by wonderful displays of fish and other creatures from all over the world.

We lunched and cruised the Tennessee River on the Dixie Bell. We were grateful to spend the morning and early afternoon indoors on a very raw and windy April day. We ended the day with a palatable history lesson by Walt Disney's 1956 film on the "Great Locomotive Chase" starring Fess Parker. dramatizing the theft and recapture of the steam engine, the General, during the Civil War.

Sunday broke out with very welcome sunshine. Following a short worship service, the MIMs car pooled to



*Caravan cruises past the old slave market in Louisville*

Chickamauga National Military Park for a stirring video presentation of the battle that

took place here on September 19-20, 1863. A park ranger took us on a four-stop tour of the battlefield. Amidst the violets, redbuds and other spring flowers, it was difficult to

re-create in our minds the dreadful scenes that happened here 142 years ago.

On a bright, beautiful April 4, the group car pooled to Barnsley Gardens, an Italianate style manor built in the 1840s by shipping tycoon Godfrey Barnsley. The manor is in ruins, but the formal garden has been largely restored. The guardian of the Barnsley family story, Clent

Coker, gave us a spritely tour inspiring some of us to buy his book about the Barnsleys. When the property was on the market in the 1990s, Coker convinced a German prince, Hubertus Fugger, to buy it and rescue the property by turning it into a resort with a golf course, quaint cottages and restaurants. Before our tour, we had a delicious lunch in the Grill which is much more elegant than it sounds.



*Caravaneers enjoy an ice cream break*



*The Millers with tour guide at old Governor's Mansion*

Lovely spring weather continued on April 5 as we traveled to Kennesaw, GA for Caravaneers a tour of the Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History. Our guide, Harper, was highly enthusiastic about showing us this impressive museum. The star exhibit was the most famous steam engine in the world, the General, which was the engine stolen by the Yankees in 1862. It was chased through the Georgia countryside by a determined group of Confederates who recaptured it when the General ran out of wood and water.

Following a pleasant lunch at the Trackside Café, the

mountain, but failed to dislodge the Southerners entrenched on the top. However, the setback failed to stop General William T. Sherman in his advance to take Atlanta.

The hosts of the KOA campground graciously provided grilled chicken, brisket and

sausage as the focal point of our potluck supper which was a fine ending for a fine day. However, we were saddened that Henry Snyder and Marcia Winters had to leave us, because her sister had suffered a severe stroke.

On April 6, we made our way individually as best we could through the Atlanta traffic to the campground at Stone



*Entertainment at Milledgeville Campground*

Mountain. With a free afternoon, we went our separate ways to enjoy the attractions of Atlanta. In the evening, we reassembled for a hamburger cookout followed by the treat of watching the spectacular laser show which was projected on Stone

Mountain. The predicted rain conveniently held off until all of us were cozily tucked in our coaches.

On Thursday April 7 we went to Confederate Hall to watch a video

on the history of the Atlanta campaign and then to Memorial Hall to see a film about carving the figures of Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee and Thomas Jackson on Stone Mountain. After lunch on our own, we wended our various ways through the park checking out the Plantation, the Skylift, the train ride around the mountain and the shops. The dire threat of deluges passed us by and we spent a dry day until about 6 p.m. when a shower dampened those going out for dinner.

Friday was a free day, so the golfers golfed, the shoppers shopped, the cleaners cleaned, the loafers loafed and in the evening, 18 baseball fans attended the opening home game of the Atlanta Braves 2005 season. Thanks to the Ledbetters' son-in-law, Kanyon West, who controls tickets to the Braves' games, they had excellent seats close to first base. They watched the Braves beat the Mets 3 to 1.

Leaving Stone Mountain on Saturday, the seventeen coaches traveled through beautiful Georgia countryside decorated with wisteria, dogwood, redbud, forsythia, and azaleas to arrive in Madison, a town spared from



*Ranger leads us on a tour of POW Camp Lawton*

caravaners drove a few miles to the Visitors' Center at Kennesaw Mountain battlefield where on June 27, 1864 the North charged up the steep



*Caravaneers on tour of Claxton Fruit Cake factory*



*A Park Ranger gives us a personal tour of the Chickamauga National Battlefield*

destruction during Sherman's March to the Sea. After lunching at the Colonial Inn buffet and watching an unplanned extra -an NAACP parade-, we took a walking tour of Madison and some of its romantic antebellum houses. Remounting our RVs, we proceeded on to Milledgeville where we stayed in a new campground, Scenic Mountain RV Park.

Sunday morning omelets were prepared in a novel way with campers selecting the ingredients to include in their omelets and putting them in baggies. Eggs were added to the baggies which were dropped in boiling water. Voila! Omelets with no messy bowls or pans to clean! In the afternoon, we toured Milledgeville by trolley with stops at the former Governor's Mansion and the Capitol which is now part of the Georgia Military College. The Governor's Mansion has gone through a \$10 million restoration and we visited the day after the grand re-opening. The mansion, which was occupied by governors in the years prior to and during the Civil War, was decorated with many spring flower bouquets. Joe and Dee Luippold volunteered their culinary skills

to prepare chicken cacciatore for our Sunday evening meal. It was delicious!

On Monday, April 11, we hit the road early wending our way on secondary roads following Sherman's March to the Sea. It was a beautiful day and the countryside was fresh and green. We arrived at

Magnolia Springs State Park where we picnicked for lunch. A park ranger led us on a walking tour of Camp Lawton that served as a prison for federal troops for six weeks in

When Sherman arrived, he burned the entire camp.

Successfully maneuvering through a very tight gate at the park, we proceeded on to Brookwood RV Resort Park near Metter, GA. All along the drive, Janet was preparing a fabulous feast of pork roast, green beans, mashed potatoes and gravy, biscuits, cranberry salad and applesauce, topped off with blueberry dessert. We cannot figure out how she does it. After dinner, the Millers entertained us with the 1926 silent film, "The General", Buster Keaton's hilarious rendition of the great locomotive chase. It was a laugh-out-loud movie which we all enjoyed.

Once again we dodged the predicted raindrops as we stopped Tuesday in Claxton to visit the Claxton Fruitcake Co. and the Georgia Fruitcake Co. which give the town the claim to

be the country's fruitcake capital. In nearby Vidalia, GA,



*From the left; Bill and JeanAnn Miller, Rita Ham of the Yankee Army, then General "Stonewall" Jackson (aka John Ham), Janet and Russ Payne representing the Confederates*

October-November 1864. As Sherman's army approached, the prison was evacuated.

we checked in at the Vidalia Onion plant, but were several weeks too early for the

harvesting of onions. Traveling on, we stopped at Guido Gardens, where 90 year old evangelist Mr. Guido showed us his studio and gardens and told us about his ministry. Some stopped at the Mennonite store to buy groceries and a few got the word about pick-your-own strawberries and did some harvesting before returning to camp for happy hour and another delicious meal by Janet. Unfortunately, E.J. and Bettyann Poindexter had to leave us to take their daughter to Emory in Atlanta, because Debbie was having trouble with her corneal implant.

Wednesday, April 13 was a traveling day. Our route, which continued to follow Sherman's march, could have been called the azalea trail as we headed for Ft. McAlister near Savannah. Bolting our lunches after parking, we assembled at the park museum for a video and a tour of the fortifications led by the park manager who had a delightful sense of humor. The sand and dirt earthworks were assaulted eight times during the Civil War and resisted surrender seven times. The seven times were attacks from Union naval vessels anchored in the Ogeechee River, the eighth was Sherman's attack by land. The inexpensive earthen fort could be repaired overnight and so was less vulnerable than more sophisticated brick forts. At Ft. McAlister we were introduced to sand gnats, noted biting residents of the Savannah area. For dinner we

were treated to a low country specialty - Frogmore stew, which consists of corn-on-the-cob, sausage, shrimp, potatoes and onions. What a delectable combination!

Thursday surprised us with chilly weather, so we bundled up for a pleasant trolley tour of Savannah. We made one stop at the Green-Meldrim house on Madison Square. This house was the most elegant house in Savannah at the time of its construction in the 1850s and remains one of the finest today. The owner, Mr. Charles Green, offered his home as headquarters to General Sherman as he came to the end of his march to the sea. Our trolley followed a torturous path through the squares of the city giving us views of famous homes, churches, restaurants and other buildings. After the tour, we went various ways to lunch and to explore the area. Many gathered again in the evening at Love's Restaurant for dinner continuing our habit of eating well.

Friday, April 15, 2005, our last full day, started with Wilma Jean's world renowned coffee cake. That was a great send-off for a free day in Savannah. We wrapped up the day with a farewell steak dinner in the Ft. McAlister pavilion.

Enough good things cannot be said about our leaders. Janet and Russ Payne planned the menus, bought the groceries, stored stuff in their cabinets, refrigerator and freezer, rose early to prepare

breakfasts and stayed late cleaning up after dinners. We marveled at their talent and endurance. Janet is a four-star chef. The Paynes assisted JeanAnn and Bill Miller in finding excellent venues for us to visit and in checking out campgrounds suitable for our rigs. The Millers provided entertainment and educational information as well as maps and directions. All four surely performed many other services which made our caravan operate smoothly and efficiently.

Thanks are also due Les and Wilma Jean Alexander who directed our moves from one campground to the next, to Fred vonRecklinghausen who oversaw parking at the campgrounds, and to Bill Ledbetter who organized the carpools. And thanks to everybody else who pitched in and helped in any way, which included the whole caravan.

And now it is time to leave the cozy cocoon of the caravan and re-enter the reality of the world where we have to cook and plan our own itineraries and pay attention to the news of disasters every where. What a wonderful break it has been!

