



# ON THE ROAD ■ ■ ■

Volume 14, No. 4

NEWSLETTER

December, 2002

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## OKLAHOMA ROUTE 66 ROARIN' WITH EXCITEMENT!

Big doin's have happened, are happening even now as you read this, and are getting ready to happen on Oklahoma Route 66! Some things are sure-fire, others are tentative. But no matter what, there are a LOT of things that will require all the volunteerism our Association's members can muster. Read on, then contact Rick Schmigle at (918) 492-2822 evenings or Sue Preston at (405) 258-6700 Tuesdays through Saturdays from 10 am to 5 pm.

**One.** Tulsa now has at least 3 community groups dedicated to economic development along their own stretches of Route 66 corridor. They are passionate to turn their sections of 66 into vibrant communities that appeal to both Route 66 tourists and locals alike. When we finally become an official Oklahoma Scenic Byway, we will need groups like this in every single Route 66 community.

**Two.** Several restoration projects are receiving a lot of attention. You've read about Laurel Kane and the restoration of the old DX station in Afton in our last newsletter (you can also read about it on our web site). But did you know that Dawn Longacre, owner of the Rock Café, has recently renovated the historic Stroud diner to more closely capture the feel of the original restaurant (read more in an upcoming issue)? And Bill Fernau, owner of the old cottage-style Phillips 66 gas station in Chandler, recently received the Cyrus Avery Award in Springfield, Illinois at the International Route 66 Festival/National Historic Route 66 Federation banquet for the Outstanding Preservation Project (read article inside). Both Dawn and Bill were able to use Route 66 Corridor Acts Funds to assist them in their projects. The Chandler Armory restoration project continues too. Your Association wants to become actively involved in community-based restoration projects (instead of individually owned properties) – but needs to raise funds and volunteers in order to do this.

**Three.** The Association, in conjunction with the Armory Restorers group in Chandler, is sponsoring a two-day Oral History workshop February 22-23. Read more inside.

**Four.** The 2003 Oklahoma Route 66 Cruise and Car Show will be combined with a 66 Yard Sale. The Association encourages all communities and individuals with property along the Route to set up garage sales on Friday, June 13 and Saturday, June 14, weather permitting. The idea is to encourage all kinds of folks to get out on 66 and discover its joys, whether they are official cruise participants or not.

**Five.** Due to the success of our Will Rogers Marker Dedication Caravan, the Association intends to do at least one casual, caravan-style event each year. Unlike cruises where passports must be stamped, entry fees paid, and everyone is on their own, caravans are a low-key time for people simply travel together to a destination (in their own cars) and then take a tour of a historic structure.

**Six.** Although not yet definite, there is a very strong possibility that Tulsa will host a big Route 66 Festival several years from now! Needless to say, the Association will be expected to help in many ways with a lot of planning and coordination to be undertaken.

**Seven.** Pixar Films, the company behind the animated smash hits "Toy Story," "Toy Story II," and "Monsters, Inc." is creating what should be an equally huge hit about Route 66. This animated movie will be released in late 2005. This movie will generate a huge interest in Route 66 that will span three generations at least. Will we be ready?



**President's Corner**  
By Kathy Anderson

We are actively seeking an Executive Director and have talked with several people. One person has stood out the most. We hope to come to an agreement and present the new person at our Annual Meeting in January. Be sure to come!

Just what does the Executive Director do? Here is what your Board of Directors envisages the basic job entails at this stage in our Association's development:

- *Coordinates with the Oklahoma Lakes and Countries Association (OLCA) and the Tourism Dept. This means attending OLCA quarterly meetings and workshops, and filling out required paperwork for matching funds submissions, marketing and budget plans.*
- *Works closely with the OK 66 Association Board of Trustees and Board of Directors.*
- *Makes working contacts with as many communities as possible along OK Route 66.*
- *Makes working contacts with as many county commissioners as possible along OK 66.*
- *Makes working contacts with as many state house and senate representatives as possible along OK Route 66.*
- *Makes working contact with heads of Tourism, Historical Society, Transportation, and Commerce.*
- *Seeks private/corporate and grant dollars to help the OK 66 Association promote tourism along 66, preserve and protect the unique structures and character of OK 66, and encourage economic development. If appropriate, create/enhance special events that will appeal to sponsors while accomplishing OK 66 Association goals.*

As you can see, being Executive Director requires a huge commitment of time and dedication. So, for the first time, the Association will pay our Executive Director a small monthly fee and a percentage of whatever funds they are able to bring in, as well as reimburse expenses.

We will work with this person for a six-month trial period, then the Association Board and the Director will meet again to see if the partnership will be renewed for a full year.

Hope to see a large turnout at our Annual Meeting!



**Schedule of 2003 Meetings/  
Calendar of Events**

**Jan. 19, 2 PM, ANNUAL MEETING** – 4101 NW 122<sup>nd</sup> St., Prudential Building, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County (same location as last year – see map on page 12). Open to general public, only current members may vote. *Agenda:* Introduction of attendees; review of 2002 activities; election of Officers; 2003 Trip Guide plans; 2003 Cruise and Car Show plans; updates on various projects; 2003 Hall of Fame Awards; discuss fundraising for preservation and signage; any new business.

**February 22-23, ORAL HISTORY WORKSHOP** – Chandler Library. \$15 registration fee. Learn how to properly record oral histories so future generations can learn from the eyewitnesses of our past and present.

**March 9, 2 PM, BOARD MEETING** – Seaba Station in Warwick, Lincoln County. Open to general membership and the public. *Agenda:* 2003 Trip Guide and 2003 Cruise and Car Show plans.

**June 13-14-15, 2003, ANNUAL STATEWIDE CRUISE AND CAR SHOW/ROD RUN & 66 YARD SALE.**

More information to come but closing venue site will be in Stroud.

**June 22, 2 PM, BOARD MEETING** – Seaba Station in Warwick, Lincoln County. Open to general membership and the public. *Agenda:* Wrap-up discussion of cruise and car show; Any new business.

**October 26, 2 PM, BOARD MEETING** – Seaba Station in Warwick, Lincoln County. Open to general membership and the public. *Agenda:* Set date for 2004 Annual Meeting; Preliminary discussions for 2004 Cruise and Car Show/possible International 66 Festival in Tulsa; Any new business.

**Other events, but no firm dates and/or times or locations set yet:**

Bunion Derby Commemoration – late April  
Caravan-style Cruise – possibly October  
OK Route 66 Hall of Fame Awards - November

## Finally, Lucille's has new owner!

Rick Koch, a Weatherford businessman and a new business member of our Association (Rick Koch Oil Company), has purchased the famous 66 landmark from the Hamons family.

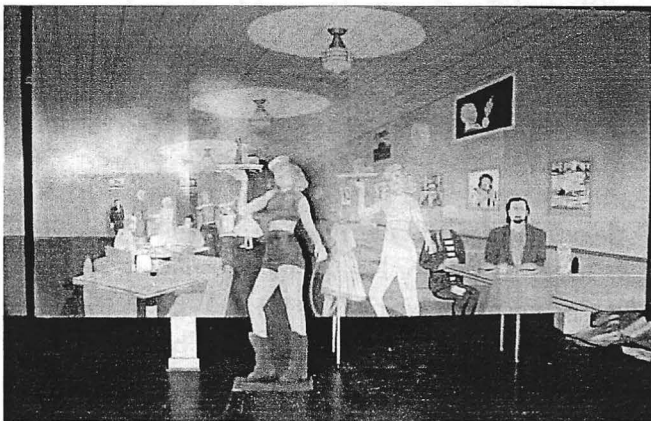
According to a story by reporter Ron Jackson that ran in the *Oklahoman* on Oct 30th, Rick owns a truck/travel stop a few miles west of Lucille's as well as a new 65-bed Holiday Inn Express. Rick's immediate plans are to ensure the old gas station is structurally sound, then restore the outside to a specific era, antique gas pumps and all. In time, he hopes to re-open the station's interior to tourists as well.

Rick will also build a 50s-style diner at his truck stop and call it "Lucille's" in honor of the woman who so personified the spirit of 66.

Hopefully, as Rick's plans mature, he will keep us posted!

## New mural completed at National 66 Museum in Elk City

Don Mullenix, Beckham County rep and long-time member of the Oklahoma Route 66 Association, has provided artwork for numerous brochures, billboards, and T-shirts. In July 2002, he completed a mural depicting the interior of "Eddie's Hamburgers," one of the facades on the front of the National Route 66 Museum.



*One section of mural prior to installation at the Museum. Photo provided by Don Mullenix.*

Don chose to do the artwork in "paint-by-numbers" style. Why? You may not know this, but Paint-by-Numbers has quite a history. Don

has provided us quite a history of Paint-By-Number. Read on.

In 1949, when he was a 24-year-old children's coloring book illustrator at the Palmer Paint Company in Detroit, Dan Robbins came up with the idea for a paint-by-numbers kit that the firm could market to adults. He credits the idea to Leonardo da Vinci, who reportedly used diagrams and numbered them when he was instructing his students.

Robbins' boss, company owner Max Klein, didn't care for the abstract fruit-and-pitcher prototype, but asked Robbins to come up with some pictures "people would actually want to paint."

In 1951, the company introduced its Craft Master paint-by-numbers kits, and by 1954 had sold more than 12 million. The originals were printed on rolled canvas.

The first set was "The Fishermen" and included gel caps of oil paint the artist set into the provided palette. After a competing company came out with the version most people recall, light blue outlines stamped onto white cardboard, Craft Master quickly changed to this more convenient system in 1955.

Palmer Paint branched out to Canada, England, France, Germany, Italy, and Norway in the early 1950s, tailoring paint-by-numbers subjects to national tastes.

As many as 50,000 kits per day were sold, provided by as many as 25 manufacturers. One of the largest and most detailed kits, Indian Summer, contained 90 colors. (*"Eddie's Hamburgers" features 62 colors.*)

Paint-by-numbers kits became a cultural icon of the 1950s and early 60s, an era marked by Hula-Hoops, Dick and Jane primers, and white-bread America, an era when conformity won out over originality.

Critics of the time thought that paint-by-numbers kits devalued aesthetic standards and lowered tastes. The hobby's friends welcomed them as "transition pieces", leading people to discover talents they never knew they had.

At the height of its popularity, paint-by-numbers touched every level of society. In 1954, President Eisenhower's appointment secretary, Thomas Edwin Stephens, distributed Picture Craft kits to cabinet secretaries and prominent Oval

Office visitors. He eventually installed the completed paintings in a West Wing corridor.

From April 2001 through January 2002, the Smithsonian Institution hosted a paint-by-numbers exhibit and retrospective, *Paint by Number: Accounting For Taste in the 1950s*, celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the phenomenon.



*Detail from mural. Photo provided by Don Mullenix.*

So next time you are out in Elk City, be sure to stop by the National Route 66 Museum and check out "Eddie's Hamburgers." Although you might be hard pressed to find a paint-by-numbers kit today, you might just find your fingers itching to do a little painting on black velvet...

### **Will Rogers Highway historic marker dedicated** By Carol Duncan

The latest Will Rogers Highway historic marker was dedicated October 5, 2002. If you drive Route 66 in western Oklahoma on your way to Texas, watch the right side of the road just west of Texola on the Texas-Oklahoma line.

In 1952, a huge promotional Route 66 Caravan placed a bronze plaque rededicating Route 66 as the Will Rogers Memorial Highway. The plaque disappeared. The new granite marker dedicated October 5 will remind travelers that Route 66 is America's Highway and honors a great American (and Oklahoman), Will Rogers.

There are a number of people to thank who together to make this happen. Thank yous go to Willis Monument Company, Beckham County

Commissioner Gary Mayville and his crew, Steve Hogg, the mayor of Texola, the Windmill Restaurant in Texola, and both Route 66 Associations of Texas and Oklahoma.

Route 66ers from Oklahoma formed a 15-car caravan at the Cherokee Trading Post, located just east of Clinton. Traveling on Route 66 with fellow roadies can be a fund way to spend a day and everyone certainly did seem to enjoy it. Newbie 66ers unfamiliar with the jogs of western Oklahoma were especially grateful to have veterans lead the way.



*Photo by Rick Schmigle.*

The trip ended at the Windmill Restaurant in Texola. People unable to join the caravan met up with the group here. Notables included Senator Robert Kerr, Representative Percy Walker, former National Route 66 Association president Mike Neff of Sayre, Becky Ransom, President of the Old Route 66 Association of Texas, and Ruth Trew, curator of the Devil's Rope Museum in McLean, Texas.

A short program was presented, concluding with a gift given to the Texas Association. In the spirit of friendship and mutual interest in Route 66, a Pendleton blanket entitled "the Home of the Brave," decorated with a Native American design, was presented to Becky Ransom, President of the Texas Association. The blanket came from the Mohawk Lodge in Clinton. The Lodge has been doing business on Route 66 for 62 years.

Then everyone headed to the border for the marker unveiling. They were met by a tour bus full of people on their way back to California, after participating in the big Route 66 Festival in Springfield, IL. Annabelle and Harley Russell, the "Mediocre Music Makers," came from Erick to lead everyone in singing a variety of songs



*The unveiling. Photo by Brad Nickson.*

including Woody Guthrie's "This Land is Your Land" and Bobby Troup's "Get Your Kicks on Route 66."



*Carol Duncan, western Vice President, by marker. Photo by Brad Nickson.*

The unveiling of the border marker brings the number located in Oklahoma to five. There is certainly a need for more. Markers help point out and honor certain people, events, or businesses and keep alive the treasures and nuggets of Route 66.

Let's do this again. What do you say, Roadies?!

### **Route 66 Oral History Workshop to be held February 22-23, 2003**

Did you ever meet someone who had a fascinating story to tell about Route 66 and you wished you had recorded their words for all 66ers to share? If so, you are not alone. Time and time again we've heard from 66ers who've expressed the same wish.

Tragically, the need to properly record these stories is growing acute, as more and more of the folks who lived and worked along the Route while it was still a commissioned highway are passing away – taking their one-of-a-kind stories with them.

Enter David Dunaway of the University of New Mexico and the National Park Service/Route 66 Corridor Act Program. David is considered by many to be the "father" of oral archiving. Thanks to funds made available through the Route 66 Corridor Act, the National Park Service is paying for David's expertise and travel/materials to hold 8 two-day workshops during the first half of 2003. Each workshop is sponsored by a state Route 66 Association. Our date is February 22-23. The registration fee is just \$15. The two-day workshop will be held 9-5 each day at the public Library in Chandler, 1021 Manvel. The Old Armory Restorers will co-sponsor the event with us.

Attendance is limited to just 20 people. Our goal is to create a cadre of skilled interviewers who want to fan out along Oklahoma 66, eager and properly prepared to document the memories of 66ers up and down the Route.

We want to give Association members first crack at the workshop, before throwing open the registration doors. If you are interested in participating in this two-day workshop, fill out the form on page 14 and mail it along with your \$15 per person registration fee to the Association no later than January 17<sup>th</sup>. If we have not received 20 registration commitments by then, we will release publicity statewide. Please do not register unless you are truly interested in learning the necessary skills and prepared to invest or rent the proper equipment to do quality oral archiving work.

David's knowledge and skills are too valuable not to be utilized. We owe it to past, present, and future generations to fill every one of those 20 seats with people dedicated to preserving our Route 66 history.

Additional information about the workshop will be posted to our web site when we receive it: [www.oklahomaroute66.com](http://www.oklahomaroute66.com)

## 66 Station in Chandler undergoing restoration, wins Cyrus Avery Award

By Emily Priddy

If Bill Fernau has his way, Route 66 travelers will be able to pump gas the old-fashioned way in the not-too-distant future.

The owner of a 1930 Phillips 66 station in Chandler has spent the past three years restoring his building and outfitting it with antique equipment, signage and lighting in the hope that he will one day be able to sell travelers the experience of pumping gas from a vintage gas pump at a vintage filling station.

"In my vision at this point in time, I would like to pump gas from the old pumps," Fernau said.



*Cottage-style station with late 1950s-era addition on the left. All photos by Kathy Anderson.*

In September, Fernau received the National Historic Route 66 Federation's Cyrus Avery award for his efforts to restore the historic property.

Fernau said he was as surprised as anybody when he won.

"I was just dumbfounded," he said. "Lisa (Mileham, a close friend) was with me and said, 'Bill! That's you!' I said, 'No, it's somebody else.' I didn't think there was a chance in the world that this little project would garner that kind of attention."

Fernau has big plans for his "little project."

In addition to selling gas from vintage pumps, Fernau eventually would like to put in a 1940s-style Phillips quick lube shop and build a stainless-steel diner on a piece of land behind the building.

"It would really make a wonderful addition to 66 and Chandler," he said.

The station, which was in constant service from 1930 to 1992, had been empty for seven years when Fernau bought it.

"It's a job that just needed doing," he said of the restoration work. "It was such a beautiful, restorable classic Phillips 66 station on Route 66 – everything was right, and the final motivator was we had another building down the road in Chandler that was on Route 66 – a nice old house – that was torn down, and an auto parts company put up a steel building, and it was such a nice corner that I was afraid that would happen to the station."



*Bill Fernau, with Maxxwel.*

Fernau grew up in Idaho and eastern Washington. His work as a hazardous materials specialist for the federal railroad administration eventually took him to Louisiana, but he "always had a fascination with Route 66."

In the late 1990s, Fernau got a job transfer

from Louisiana to Oklahoma City. A familiar sign told him he was home.

"I kept seeing a road that said, 'Six-six,' and I thought, 'Could this be Old Route 66?'" he said. "...It was funny how that 66 (was) almost like a bell going off in my head: 'Here's home.'"

Fernau rented a farm in Stroud in 1997 and spent the next two years driving past the old gas station in Chandler, hoping someone else would buy it and restore it, but it never happened.

"I just thought, 'Well, it must be up to me,'" he said.

Fernau bought the property in January 1999 and began the painstaking – and occasionally death-defying – process of restoring it.

"Initially, I just stabilized the buildings and actually fell through the roof in one of the garage areas," he laughed, recalling how he'd carefully walked along the roof, carrying a long stick like a

tightrope walker's for balance, as he inspected it for weaknesses.

After identifying the spots that needed repairs, "I got my bucket of roofing repair tar, and the next step I took, I fell through the roof," he said.

Fortunately, Fernau wasn't seriously injured in the fall, although it took a little more than a bucket of tar to repair the resulting damage to the roof.

After shoring up the roof, installing gutters and improving drainage around the building, Fernau converted part of the property to living quarters so he wouldn't have to pay rent and a mortgage at the same time.

"Fortunately, there was a tire warehouse associated with the property, and I gutted all the tire racks and took the paint off all the brick and built a very comfortable living space," he said. "This will eventually be office space."

The next step was to track down antique gas pumps, lighting, signage, an air compressor and other items for the station.

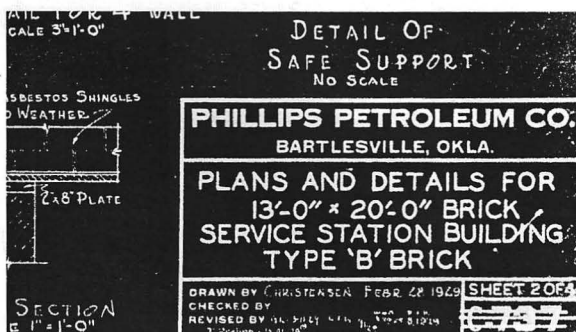
In the process of searching for authentic memorabilia, Fernau discovered unexpected riches.

"The absolute surprise to me is the human contact with the people, because these items have been in their families for 50 or 70 years, and they have a close attachment to the way they lived and the way they are," Fernau said. "Most of these folks lived and pumped gas along 66, and this is part of their heritage."

That attachment means Fernau has to invest some time and effort into convincing people to part with their treasures.

"In that time, I get to know them and their stories about 66, and it is rich -- the stories are rich," he said.

Fernau is a meticulous researcher, consulting with the Phillips 66 company's own archives to make sure he has the details right.



"Everything we've done here has been done according to archival photographs," he said. "...The only reproduction items we're going to use are the glass items that could be broken. Everything else is original."

Even with access to the company's extensive collection of photographs, blueprints, paint samples and other information, Fernau had to do some serious legwork on his own.

"There is a blue that was used on these stations from 1929 to 1930 -- two years -- and Phillips didn't know what the color was," he said. "So I went to several stations in several states and asked the owners if I could take down their downspouts and chip paint from underneath the downspout, because I knew it wouldn't be faded."

Other items -- such as vintage lights for the outside of the building and a working 1930s compressor -- have required similarly Herculean efforts, but Fernau said the "hard work" is behind him now, and he's ready to start putting together the pieces of his project.

"Next is assembling the property -- putting all the pieces of the property together," he said. "We've begun. We have a beautiful 50-year-old sign in the front."

Fernau, who has spent about \$30,000 a year



on the restoration project, isn't sure how long it will take or how much it will cost to complete. He said past projects have taught him not to bother guessing.

"Typically, it will cost twice as much as my best estimate and take three times as long as my

best estimate," he said.

In the meantime, Fernau is happy to show visitors what he's done so far.

"We have people from all over the country come and take photographs of their vehicles in front of the station," he said. "If I'm here, I give them a grand tour."

Fernau's historic Phillips 66 station is located at the corner of 7<sup>th</sup> and Manvel, right on Route 66. Just look for the huge black and orange Phillips 66 sign – you can't miss it.

*(Editor's note: Emily Priddy is a professional journalist who has been a 66 Roadie now for almost 3 years. We are glad to have her on-board!)*

### **Fire destroys Moses Keokuk House**

Preservation Oklahoma, Inc. reports that a fire of undetermined origin destroyed the oldest home in Lincoln County, the National Register-listed Moses Keokuk House located six miles south of Stroud, four miles southeast of Davenport. The fire could have started from an electrical short or from a lightning strike during a powerful storm. The 130-year old brick house had been the former home of Chief Moses Keokuk and played an important role in the history of the Sac and Fox Nation in Oklahoma.

### **2003 Oklahoma Route 66 Hall of Fame**

Every two years the Oklahoma Route 66 Association inducts two special Oklahomans who have made significant contributions to Route 66 into its Hall of Fame – one in the living category, the other in the posthumous/deceased category. The 2001 honorees were Jim Ross (living) and Gladys Cutberth (deceased). Previous inductees include Michael Wallis, Don Mullenix, and Lucille Hamons (living), and Kent Ruth and Jack Cutberth (deceased).

It's time again for us to ask our membership to submit nominations in writing. Please do not make your nomination longer than one page in length. You may submit more than one nomination. If you submitted one in the past, feel free to resubmit it. And remember, we have two categories – living and posthumous/deceased – and everyone nominated must have lived or worked in Oklahoma and made significant contributions to the Route.

To help you prepare a nomination with enough information for our panel to make informed decisions we've prepared a helpful guideline.

1. Name of the nominee; note either living or deceased.
2. Does/did this person live in a Route 66 town in Oklahoma?
3. Describe this person's contributions to 66.
4. List any awards this person may have won.
5. List any memberships in organizations.
6. List any contributions this person may have also made to their city, county, and state.
7. Include as many specific dates as possible.
8. Did/does this person own or work in an Oklahoma Route 66 business? How long?
9. Be prepared to provide a portrait-style photo – this is necessary for the plaque.
10. Be prepared to provide any added documentation or answer any questions the nomination committee may ask.
11. For multiple nominations, write a separate letter/page for each one.
12. Be sure to include your name, address, and phone number on each nomination so the committee may contact you.

All nominations must be in the Association's mail box no later than March 1. No exceptions!  
Mail your nomination(s) to: OK Route 66 Hall of Fame, P.O. Box 21382, Oklahoma City, OK 73156.

The honor "Hall" displaying all the plaques is currently located at the Oklahoma Route 66 Museum in Clinton.

Once we have a date and location set for the induction ceremony, we will let you know. Although the 2003 inductees will know that they have been selected, no advanced notice will be given to the public prior to the event.

### **75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Bunion Derby in 2003, OK commemoration relay planned** By Carol Duncan

Next year marks the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of C.C. Pyle's first International Transcontinental Foot Race, better known as the Bunion Derby. This was a monumental event in the annals of Route 66 history. In 1927, sports promoter C.C. Pyle started organizing sponsors, sending out publicity, recruiting support people, and persuading possible entrants to be a part of his version of a colossal P.T. Barnum-type event. When the



National U.S. Highway 66 Association had their 1927 convention in Albuquerque, "Cash and Carry" Pyle was there to make his official pitch. They pledged \$60,000 to be one of the major sponsors. After all, the LA-to-Chicago leg would be run along Route 66.

The race began on March 4, 1928 at Ascot Park in Los Angeles. It ended May 26<sup>th</sup> at Madison Square Garden in New York City.

Out of the hundreds of people who signed up for the grueling test of endurance were six men from Oklahoma. Against all the early predictions, the winner was Andy Payne, from Foyil, Oklahoma. Foyil, as you may know, is a Route 66 community. How fitting! The other five Oklahomans were J.R. Byers of Harrah, Robert Henson of Wellston, Charles Turley of Tulsa, LeRoy Freeman, Oklahoma City, and John Cecil White of Clinton. Note that five of the six from Oklahoma lived in Route 66 communities!

One way we Association members can salute this major event is to form a relay-type fun run. An Oklahoma tribute plaque will pass from member to member across the state. Each member must ride or drive any street-legal mode of transportation. We need volunteers to sign up for whatever distance they can do. We are going to try to follow somewhat closely to the 1928 alignment of Route 66. In western Oklahoma this means going through the towns of Delhi, Doxey, Bridgeport, Geary, and Calumet.

The sooner people sign up and the more people sign up, the better, so we can organize and make the event smoother and more fun. Tentative date is the last weekend in April, 2003. The event is somewhat dependent on weather as the 1928 alignment does include unpaved roads.

To be a part of this event, fill out and mail the form located on page 14 by March 1 to the Oklahoma Route 66 Association, P.O. Box 21382, Oklahoma City, OK 73156.

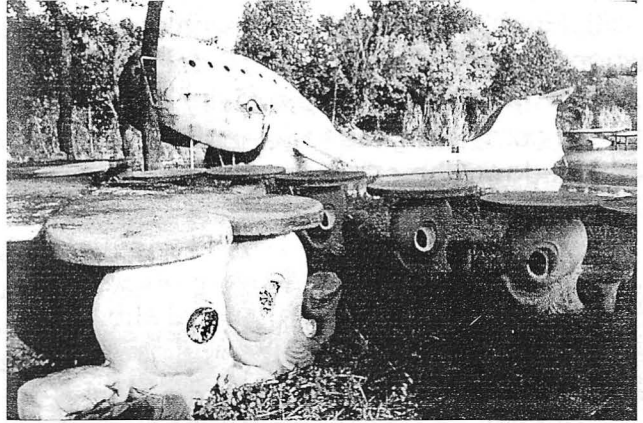
## Romancing the Whale

By Thomas Repp

Many people never quite get his story straight, but the Blue Whale of Catoosa never seems to mind. Lounging in landlocked Oklahoma—a salty anomaly, a shutterbug's watery dream—he suits

every sailor slipping down Route 66 with the same sloppy smile.

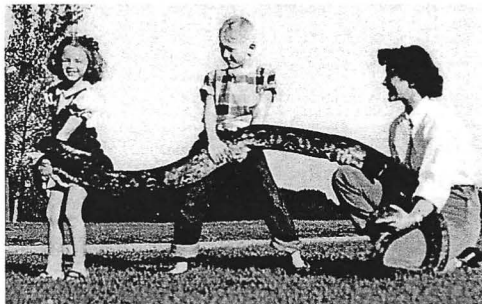
"I just saw another news article," says current whale co-owner, Dee Dee Davis Belt. "And it said my dad built the whale for my mom as a wedding present. I see this written in newspapers; I see this written in books. And it's just not right!"



*All photos in this article, with the exception of the last one, are courtesy of the Davis Family and Mock Turtle Press. Copyright, all rights reserved.*

The true tale of Catoosa's favorite whale does begin with one whopping romance. Hugh S. Davis was a man who adored animals. In his youth, Hugh inched his way through Africa with wildlife wonderkids Martin and Osa Johnson. In his prime, Hugh stood front-and-ferocious-center as director of Tulsa's Mohawk zoo.

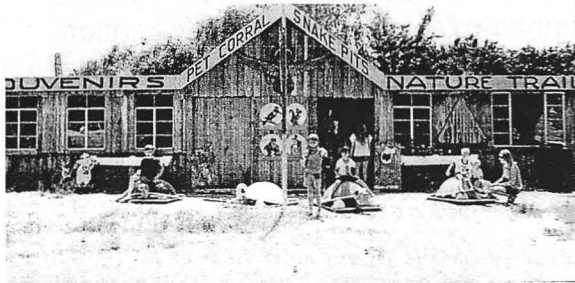
Hugh's bride, Zelta, shared her husband's love of things untamed. She joined Hugh on the Chautauqua lecture circuit—wrapping reptiles around her waist while he espoused the beauty of beasts. Eventually, Zelta talked Hugh into installing an alligator farm near their home—on property that fronted Route 66. When Hugh left the Mohawk zoo—and began spending more time around the house—he opted to drop the gators and shape a pond on the property into a pretty waterpark.



*Dee Dee, Blaine, and Zelta Davis with large python.*

"The kids kept saying, 'We need something to jump off of,'" Zelta recalled in 1997. "Then Hugh had Harold Thomas over there—a friend of ours who was a welder. Hugh knew exactly what he was going to build, but he wouldn't tell me. It looked to like it was going to be an airplane."

Jumbo jet, no; leviathan, yes: Hugh presented the whale to Zelta on their anniversary. It was a lavish gift. Hugh's notes show the whale was built for a whopping 1970s cost of 1,910 dollars and 24 cents. He exhausted 126 sacks of dry Portland Concrete in completing his task—and \$5.75 in nails to tack down the original redwood decking.



*Early photo of Nature's Acre. Dee Dee is at the far right, kneeling by Lee Davis. The turtles out front were constructed from the same material from which Hugh fashioned the first "hat" the whale wore.*

Hugh calculated the painted surface of the whale at 2,520 square feet. That number has earned the respect of preservationists who've stepped forward since 1980—the year Hugh's waterpark closed. One company spent six thousand dollars in whale refurbishing. Former Oklahoma governor Frank Keating once appeared on site with a paintbrush—ready to swab.

On August 15, 2002, the latest group of whale boosters arrived. They came armed with a new Roadside Attraction Sign, and they came from Hampton/Hilton Hotels Corp which had chosen the whale as the 12th project in its "Explore the Highway with Hampton, Save A Landmark" Program. With Hampton's help, a new fence was erected on the whale's grounds. The old snack bar was repainted, and a new septic system was installed to serve sailors too long in their cars.

And the whale's sloppy smile?

"Hampton took care of that, too," says Dee Dee. "They brought out this big mop, and they brushed his teeth."



*August 15, 2002. Photo by Brad Nickson.*

*(Editor's note: Thomas is not only a member of our Association, he is the author of "Route 66: The Empires of Amusement" and Executive Editor, "American Road" magazine – see below.)*

### **News from our membership**

*(Tidbits from press releases sent to us by our members. If you have something going on, be sure to let us know!)*

ExitHere.net announces the establishment of a new, free web portal geared to travelers with a sense of adventure. Located at [www.exithere.net/start/](http://www.exithere.net/start/), it provides hundreds of quick links to internet sources about all kinds of information and destinations for all 50 states. Some links may be considered bordering on the eccentric while most lead to practical things like mapping sources, weather, highway information, and official tourism sites. ExitHere.net is the creation of Drew Knowles of Hurst, Texas, who also serves as our Association's web master.

Marion Davidson, recently retired after 40 years as a new automobile dealer in Weatherford, has opened Route 66 Thunderbirds at 2121 East Main in Weatherford, the west suite. The business specializes in certain older model Thunderbirds and other special interest cars – some located on-site while others might be on consignment and located in other cities and states. Marion has been a member of our Association for years, but recently signed up his new business with its own business membership.

Marion has furnished a 1956 Thunderbird to the Oklahoma Route 66 Museum in the outer WOW room and this car will also appear in a History Channel documentary on Route 66. To contact Marion, check out his business card ad located toward the back of the newsletter.

*American Road* is a new magazine for those who love all of America's historic US highways – nostalgia lovers, family vacationers, retirees, and every other class of road-bound tourist who yearns to learn about or travel our nation's vintage highways and auto trails. Published by Mock Turtle Press and helmed by Association members Thomas Repp and Jim Ross, *American Road* celebrates such two-lane thoroughfares as the Lincoln Highway, Yellowstone Trail, US 1, US 101, Lonesome 50, Golden 99, National Old Trails Road, and of course, Route 66. The quarterly magazine will also feature guest preservationists. The premiere issue is slated to arrive in Spring, 2003. For more information, go to [www.mockturtlepress.com](http://www.mockturtlepress.com) or call toll-free 877-285-5434.

Michael Wallis is now home, recovering from serious injuries after being hit by a car while riding his motorcycle. A number of surgeries were performed and a hip replacement may still be on the horizon. Michael is still undergoing physical therapy but his spirits are high and he thanks everyone for their warm thoughts and prayers.

### **Hitchhikers – news relating to 66 from other states**

*Route 66 Chronicles, Volume One: Shadows of the Past over Route 66, Arizona and New Mexico*, by Gerald Knowles, is available for purchase. The book covers the earlier history of the areas that Route 66 later ran through. Volume II will touch on the Route 66 era. For more information on how to order, email Gerald at [gknowles@newmex.com](mailto:gknowles@newmex.com) or call him at (505) 758-9353.

*Haunted Highway: The Spirits of Route 66*, by Ellen Robson and Dianne Halicki, combines America's fascination with the Mother Road with its love of great ghost stories. The book checks out sixty-six places reputed to be haunted along Route 66 and neighboring communities. The

book is published by Golden West Publishers. Contact them at 800-658-5830 or go to their web site at [www.goldenwestpublishers.com](http://www.goldenwestpublishers.com).

*Route 66 Magazine* has issued a release reassuring people that although it has closed its gift shop in Williams AZ, the Magazine itself will continue to be published, but at a new location in Laughlin NV. Its web site, catalog, and Internet sales will also continue. The Magazine has franchised their gift shop to Gabe's Office Supply in Sapulpa, a new business member of our Association. They hope to establish additional franchise shops along the Route. No information was provided on how to contact the Magazine after January 1 except to say that information would be provided in their Winter Issue, and presumably on their web site, which is [www.route66magazine.com](http://www.route66magazine.com).

Endless Games ([www.endlessgames.com](http://www.endlessgames.com)), a board game publisher, will release ROUTE 66: THE GREAT AMERICAN ROAD TRIP GAME, a fast-paced, challenging family board game. Through the game, players relive the magic, memories and nostalgia of Route 66, as they learn what makes America such a diverse and special country. And, of course, have some kicks! For more information, contact Richard C. Levy at [toysrme2@bellsouth.net](mailto:toysrme2@bellsouth.net)

Home movies sought for Coral Court documentary. Route 66 author Shellee Graham and Missouri filmmaker Bill Boll have teamed up to produce a 30-minute documentary on the Coral Court Motel, and are actively seeking home movies and videos of the demolished landmark.

The project will chronicle the life of the notorious Route 66 motel, which stood for 54 years at 7775 Watson Road in St. Louis County. Known as a site of illicit romance and for its role in the 1953 Greenlease kidnapping, the Coral Court's reputation frequently overshadowed its historic and architectural significance.

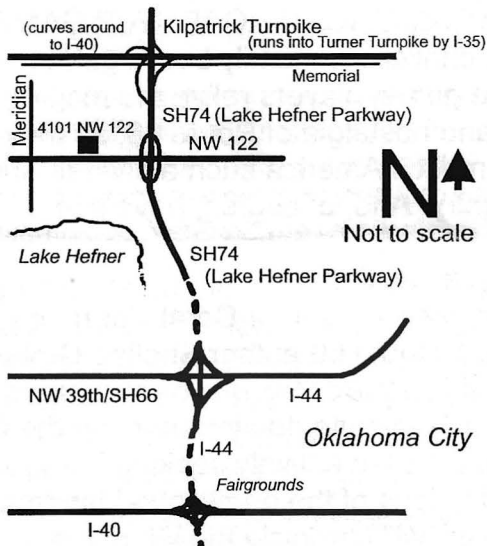
When constructed in 1941, it was an icon of luxury featuring 20 rooms in streamline-moderne cottages, spread out on a landscaped 8.5-acre lot. However, the secluded atmosphere and short-term rates became a magnet for couples seeking privacy, and the business soon earned its nickname the "No-tell Motel."

Following the death of its creator John Carr in 1984, the Coral Court fell steadily into

disrepair and closed in 1993. Despite earnest preservation efforts, including a listing on the National Historic Register, the buildings were razed in 1995 for a residential subdivision.

The half-hour video documentary will feature interviews and archival newsreels of the defunct motel, but Boll and Graham hope to supplement the available footage with home movies - if they can find any. Anyone with vintage photographs, movies or videos of the Coral Court should call Shellee Graham at 314-291-7393 or email her at shellee66@earthlink.net.

Graham's book "Tales From the Coral Court" won "The Book of the Year" Award from Route 66 Magazine. Her photographic exhibit entitled Return to Route 66 will make its Oklahoma debut from August 22 – October 10, 2004 at the Edmond Historical Society Museum in Edmond.



### Directions to Annual Meeting

From the south: take I-44 or I-40 to I-44 to SH74, which is locally known as Lake Hefner Parkway and go north. Take the NW 122nd exit, turn left over the Parkway, then go approximately .4-.5 miles to 4101 NW 122, which is right after the Augusta Apts. on the north side of the street. If you go too fast, you'll miss the entrance to the Country Club Office Park II which is where the Prudential building is.

### Directions from the north/Turner Turnpike:

When leaving Turner Turnpike go straight and join the Kilpatrick Turnpike. The next exit you want is a high ramping exit marked 74 South/Hefner

Parkway. As you are merging onto 74, the next exit is for NW 122<sup>nd</sup>. Take the exit, turn right at the light, go about .4-.5 miles to 4101 NW 122<sup>nd</sup>, which is located immediately past the Augusta Apts. Turn into the County Club Office Park II – the Prudential Building is right there.

### Mail Bag

*A postcard received from Tom & Lynne Miller of Long Beach, CA:*

Just wanted to say THANK YOU for the wonderful job you did in creating the "Official Oklahoma Route 66 Trip Guide." The maps were outstanding and the individual town highlights were very interesting. Please let your advertisers know that we based many of our decisions on whether a business was a member of your Association.

*Two separate letters proposing different plans to somehow re-commission Route 66 as a US Highway – a highly controversial topic in the 66 community. The letters are too long to reproduce in their entirety. One letter, from George Kemberling, Jr. of Rogers, Arkansas, states in part:*

Old U.S. 66 should not just be a memory in our hearts and minds. U.S. 66 is "America" like baseball and apple pie. It's a part of us that should continue on forever! We should make an effort to establish a new U.S. 66 with old and new alignments (*Editor's note: by, among other things, building new roads to add links so someone driving the historic route doesn't have to enter the interstate*). Make the Mother Road whole again. If interested, contact the Oklahoma Dept of Transportation, 200 NE 21<sup>st</sup> Street, Oklahoma City, OK 73105.

*The other letter is from Fred Cain of Topeka, Indiana. Here are a few excerpts:*

The backbone of my proposal is to decommission all those segments of Interstate Highway between Chicago and Santa Monica and replace them with a new, recertified U.S. Route 66. Only I-15 would remain, co-signed with U.S. 66 Barstow-Ontario... Then recommission the old historic route as U.S. 66H... starting with sections still under state jurisdiction... It could be a long-term goal to have virtually the entire historic route

eventually re-commissioned as U.S.66H... This is by no means the only approach that could be taken... State DOTs are not going to embrace this gladly... For those of you who live in a Route 66 state, I can't urge you strongly enough to write or call your state representative.

**Time to renew your membership?**

You can either go on-line and download our membership form and mail that in, or simply write a check and mail it to:

Oklahoma Route 66 Association  
P.O. Box 21382  
Oklahoma City, OK 73156.

Individual: \$15, Family: \$25, Overseas: \$25,  
Business: \$35, Club: \$40, Benefactor: \$500+

**Newsletter advertising rates, per issue:**

**Members:**

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¼ page	15.00
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Business members get one free business card ad upon joining, space permitting, so if you have not yet submitted a card and you are a business member, please be sure to send us one!

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Attorneys at Law

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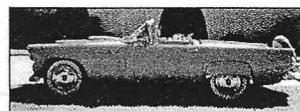
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[mdwford@peoplepc.com](mailto:mdwford@peoplepc.com)

**Bunion Derby Entry Form**

Mail to: Route 66 Bunion Derby, P.O. Box 21382, OKC OK 73156. Return by March 1.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number (day) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number (evening) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Best time/way to reach me \_\_\_\_\_

For the Bunion Derby Commemorative Celebration I volunteer to cover the distance from the town or community of:

\_\_\_\_\_

to \_\_\_\_\_

The transportation method I will use is

\_\_\_\_\_

**Oral History Workshop Registration Form.** February 22-23, Chandler Public Library, 9-5.

Registration fee: \$15 per person. If two of you are registering, make indicate both names. Make your check payable to the Oklahoma Route 66 Association and mail to P.O. Box 21382, OKC OK 73156 no later than January 20. Snacks will be provided. Restaurants are within easy walking distance or a short drive away. You will receive additional information in the mail after you have registered. If more than 20 registrations are received by the time yours arrives, your check will be returned to you.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number (day) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number (evening) \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Best way/time to reach me \_\_\_\_\_

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Please patronize our business members. When you do, let them know that you are also a member of the Association.

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December, 2002

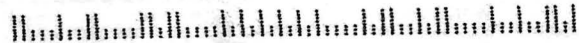


7/1/2003 F  
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5304 NW 111 St  
Oklahoma City OK 73162

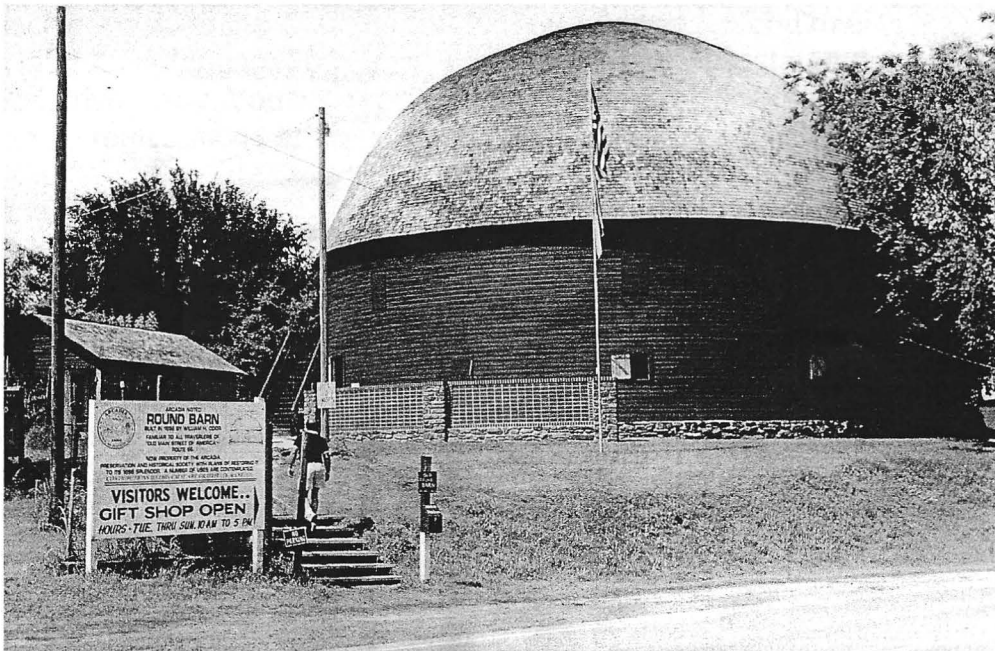
**PLEASE CHECK YOUR EXPIRATION DATE!**  
If it is highlighted, your membership has expired  
or is getting ready to. Please renew now –  
see information on page 13!

*This newsletter was printed by Kinko's, 101 E. Second St., Edmond.*

73162+3928 20



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