

98TH TIN CAN TOURIST WINTER CONVENTION FEBRUARY 23-26TH, 2017

Another Tin Can Tourists Winter Convention is in the history books... the 98th one to be exact! Before you know it, the 100th will be here and you certainly don't want to miss our big Centennial Winter Celebration. There are many things being planned for this momentous occasion, so start getting your plans together to be able to attend! A lot of things in the world have changed since the first Winter Convention but the core ingredient of the Tin Can Tourists recipe remains the same... the Canners themselves... the people have always made this group what it is! So sit back... lend me your ear for a bit and I'll fill you in on how people made this years event so memorable!

As what has become an increasing trend at the TCT events, Trailerites started arriving on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday with their rigs. A few even carried over from the event that was at the Sertoma Youth Ranch on the previous weekend! The weather was supposed to be rainy on Wednesday but it ended up just spitting a little here and there which, to the joy of the early comers, made for a great day to get set up, get caught up with friends and make some lasting new friendships. Several volunteered with the setup and serving of the Ranch Hands Sertoma Club's Hayride, Country Swing Dance Luncheon for 140 mentally/physically handicapped adults. It was fulfilling to be part of what Sertoma Youth Ranch is all about!



Thursday, the entertainment continued with an increasing arrival of rigs coming down the hill to the Ranch. Couples displayed their mad skills (or were they bad?) in an impromptu trailer jockey competition, getting into their favorite spots. Final count hit 110 registered rigs, 10 of which came down from Michigan. TCT State Representative Donna Spinelli came all the way from Colorado picking up Sarah McRenolds in Texas along the way... but... to the shock of many, the long distance award went to John and Valerie Driscoll from Oregon traveling in a Gypsy Wagon converted 1949 Federal 2 ton truck. (More on this rig later).



The general m.o. for the day continued to be group hugs and smiles while Mother Nature provided what Florida is known for! Many took advantage of nearby site-seeing trips to old-school, roadside attractions of a bygone era. One could hug a beautiful, live mermaid at Weeki Wachee Springs and paddle along it's crystal clear river or marvel at the strange "zoo" of critters at Boyett's Grove while satisfying a craving for local grown citrus!

Everyone had to hurry back and finish setting up camp to be ready for the ever important Happy Hour/Business Meeting. The sharing of libations and good cheer helped us get through the meeting in a record making 38 seconds. This, or course, left ample time for more libations and most importantly... the embarrassment, er... rather the initiation of all the new TCT members. The victims... I mean... the pledges were taught the importance (under penalty of 20 lashes with a wet noodle) in keeping the TCT handshake, sign, song and motto, top secret! The TCT class of 2017 made us proud! All gradgitated with some dissemblance of honor as the libations continued into a tastefully executed lasagne dinner.



With our bellies full and chairs filled to capacity... Hunt Jones' on point and powerful presentation of "Are We 'There Yet?'" America's Offbeat Roadside Attractions captivated us all! Every year Hunt Jones tirelessly (or is it tiredly?) spends (1000) countless hours blending unbelievable research with unimaginable arrays of photos. Since we all Speak Vintage, we were mesmerized and believed it all!! It should not go without saying that Canners who are lucky enough to partake, are super appreciative for all that Hunt does to both educate and remind us of these wonderful things from our past and keeping history alive!



TCT swag door prizes, soon being dispersed, charmed the audience a little longer. They cheered and sneered as friends would win, anxiously waiting for their number to be called before enjoying their circles of campfires for the night.

Friday blanketed us with a few more inches of Florida Winter Sunshine. Was that the high light of the day? No sir!! After a hearty attack of their eggs, bacon, and hash browns from Sertoma Youth Ranch; those with an adventurous side caravanned to Tom Small's Private Collection (made sure to use proper grammar here) of vintage cars, signage, gas pumps, tractors, Cushmans, pedal cars and a few bicycles too! Wow! To say that this



was impressive just isn't enough. I would say that his "garage" was like 60' x 220' give or take, but of course, one's garage is never big enough! Every where you looked was fully restored signage hanging from the ceiling or wall and the neon signs lit up and were spinning around! The floor space was full of really nice cars and I was told that the empty spots were cars "out on loan" for a show somewhere. I really wanted to know what was "out" for the day. Many continued on to the quaint, vintagesque, downtown of Dade City, FLA. Antique shopping could land you the perfect prop for staging

your trailer for a show and a great lunch at Steph's Southern Soul food made you wish that you had a bigger stomach!

After returning to camp, many enjoyed increasing their number of TCT friends on Facebook while getting ready for the big Pot Luck meal. It seems that we tend to eat a lot around these Conventions doesn't it? While exchanging the best recipes and flavors was great, the most enchanting thing of entire evening started out with Roger and Bev Reger giving a little



informational speech before dinner in regards to all the fun they've had being involved with the "Steam Punk" crowd/club/movement... or at least that's what Bev thought!! In reality, Mr. Unromantic (self named) had preplanned a surprise to get down on one knee and ask her to marry him all over again and renew their vows. Forrest Bone, The Royal Can Opener himself, came out in his Robes and officiated the ceremony

to re-announce them as husband and wife! Wow! Was she surprised! We all were... hardly a dry eye in the place! What a loving couple! The wedding party continued into the night with the Karen and Jimmy Band. Great music and dancing... although (gee, I sound like my dad here) I thought that the music was a bit too loud... does that mean that I'm getting old? I guess, like our rigs... we all are!



Saturday, the big day...

The threat of yet several more inches of Florida Sunshine accompanied a filling biscuit and gravy breakfast... then... (drum roll please)... The Open House!!

Finally, we get to the part of the club that has to do with the rigs themselves. (Or does it?) It's what we all look forward to, after all the cleaning and bathing and polishing and primping... and don't forget about the work we also do to our trailers!! We look forward to propping our trailers and staging all of our little trinkets and treasures and even donning our vintage costumes! Some are family heirlooms, some are hunted down in antique stores, Goodwill and eBay. All is put into place just in time for the open house to start! Gates are open, curtain goes up, it's show time people! This a blast for all of the Tin Can Tourists members. We are an eclectic



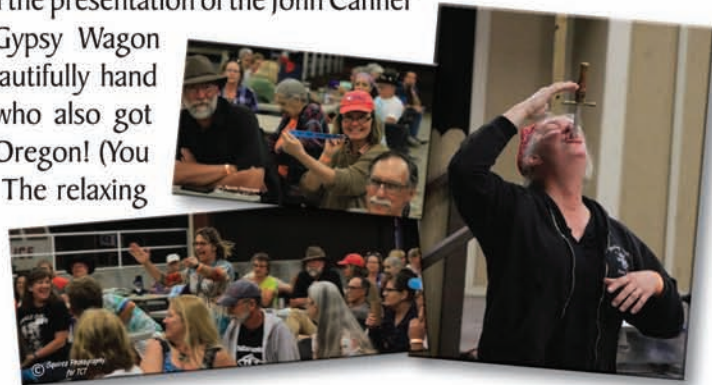
mix of actors in this show as we have a huge variety of what we bring on stage. From really old to really new rigs with a variety of ways to put on a show. From fully themed setups to stepping into a specific time period when you go through that front door. But the coolest part is that the basic story of each is still the same and that the story comes back full circle when you consider that this very day of the Open House has more to do with people than the trailers themselves. Think about it... why do we do what we do?! A big hint... we had 260 car loads of people come to the open house this year! Those people enjoyed sharing their stories of the past or what they hoped for in the future, as much as we enjoyed our sharing with them. It's such a great departure from reality!

Forrest, Jeri, Cherie and I worked together to bring in some great musical entertainment to play on stage during the open house for everyone's enjoyment. The Folk/Americana style of these entertainers fit in perfect with the Tin Can Tourists motto of "clean, wholesome entertainment for the camp". The musicians were blown away with the detail and dedication of how we do, what we do! They enjoyed looking at our vintage rigs as much as they enjoyed sharing their craft! Seeing a pattern yet??

After all the excitement of the Open House Show came to an end, it was time for some good old Southern BBQ. Like you know by now... we like to eat... and eat we did! Again! (Another pattern here- facilitated by Hungry Harry's BBQ in Land O Lakes, FL) Many enjoyed sharing stories of the stories that we heard from the show-goers that day... "Is this an Airstream" or "I/we/my Momma/my Grand Momma had one just like this... but it was 20 ft. shorter... and the kitchen was over here... and it was a different color..." I used to correct them but realized that it only takes the smile off of their faces.



Festivities were highlighted with the presentation of the John Canner Culp Special Interest Award to the Gypsy Wagon converted 1949 Federal 2TN truck beautifully hand crafted by John and Valerie Driscoll, who also got the honorary long distance award from Oregon! (You will see more on this Rig in the future) The relaxing evening continued with a clever fund raising raffle in which the participants brought something that they would be happy to receive themselves and folks bought tickets to drop into individual drawings for each item that they would like to win. The most unique item brought to the table was a sword that was actually swallowed right there in front of everyone by none other than TCT Representative At Large, Lexie Kensington! This all was a big hit that raised over \$1000, designated towards top secret festivities for the 100 Year Centennial Celebration!



Those that had the energy left from such an exciting day stayed up until late into the night listening to live music around the campfire provided by the incredible musicians that graced the stage that day... A huge kiss on the cheek from Cherie goes out to: Brian Smalley, John Dickey IV, Michael Elias, Frank Julian, Jordan Cherkinsky, Tom Ellis, Dave and Diane Berry, Bob Walsh, James Hawkins, Emmett Carlisle and especially Curtis and Ingrid Schaper for wrapping the baling wire and jute twine around the whole music thing!

Sunday morning came too quickly indeed! By the time donuts and coffee were over it was time for many to pack up and say their good-byes to each other as they slowly headed up the hill for home. Some took advantage of one last trip into town for a meal and a select few, like us, stayed until Monday to enjoy the calm after the storm.

By now you have probably picked up on the patterns of this 98th Tin Can Tourists Winter Convention; The TCT is about people... (it's members and those that aren't... yet!) The TCT is about food and camping... (we are, after all, an eating club with a camping disorder)... and... I almost forgot... we happen to really, really, really like vintage: mobile homes, trailer coaches, travel trailers, canned hams, motor-coaches, camper-vans, gypsy wagons, teardrops, tent-campers... well, you get the idea!

It absolutely can not go without sayin' a big ole' "Thank You!!" to the Bone family for continuing this Rolling History. Plus all those many, many behind the scenes folks that were a part of this as well. The TCT Reps, Caterers, Sertoma Youth Ranch, Musicians, TCT members and Show-goers. It's all the people involved that made this entire Convention come to life!

Hope to see you around a campfire real soon,
 Carl H. Sturgeon II
 Cherie L. Milburn



Kudos to Richard Squires, Donna Spinelli, Pete Whitley, Alex Alexander and Christine Swalgin for all these memorable photos!