

28 July'09

Fellow TMC'09 participants,

By now I suspect that most of us have returned home with our MVs either with us or arriving soon (our friends from France come to mind). I hope your return trip has been a safe one. This note is going out to all registered participants. If you didn't join, then we'll get you your kit – either @ Convention or later.

Ian Wallace – we hope that your recovery is going as well as possible. We missed you after Rawlins to SF! You should have your Royal Enfield back home by now. Sorry for the DPG mud on it. If somehow it arrived clean, then I was only joking about the mud (no one tell him the truth! ☺)

Ok – I will say it again – what a fabulous trip we had – and thanks to every one of you for your participation and outstanding help!

Ok – I will also say this – I have been a little bored for these days since we finished in SF! I am sure that I am not alone with this feeling, based upon comments from those that I have talked to. A good problem to have – and yes I know how to fix this problem ...

Some points to recall.

- We drove 20 days, and rested 6 days. No one seemed to complain about those rest days. Remember the meals in FNAS and the environment @ Wooster!
- We covered 3,250 miles on the Convoy, per the 1919 mileage charts. I am sure our odometers all recorded something different.
- We traveled through 11 States plus the District of Columbia.
- We had a WW I MV on the road every day.
- We passed through or stopped at approximately 350 towns or cities or villages. That's **350!!!!**
- We had the fabulous help of around 50 local teams for our meals and lodging and static shows at each of our stopping points & rest days.
- We parked our MVs along the curb of Constitution Avenue (well – most of us did anyway ... not mentioning any names ...) and left DC with a Police escort that most people only see on television.
- We crossed this great country in a 2 – 3 mile long column without reservation or restriction and in many places with Police escort.
- We had “line to line” Police escort in MD, PA and IN. A special thanks to these teams.
- We drove our Convoy carefully through a herd of cattle west of Austin NV, across an Army base in UT that very few people even know about and traveled along and over sections of the Pony Express Trails.
- We were encouraged and supported by far too many people to count! They included children and seniors, Police and Veterans, farmers and SPAM factory workers and ... well, people like you and I. Our Veterans standing there (rain or shine) straight as an arrow and saluting **us**. Somebody shoulda' told them ... we were doing this **for them**. They had it all backwards.
- Who knows how many US flags we had waved for us. Some flags were large enough to cover a deuce-and-a-half!
- We consumed 2 dozen wooden clothes pins to combat vapour locks.
- We have countless photos and videos to our name – many of which we'll never see.
- We met 2 people that remembered the original Convoy of 1919.

- We warmed the hearts of many of our Veterans, who warmed our hearts right back and caused more than one lump in our throats and tear in our eyes.
 - We were escorted through a multitude of cities and towns by local & county and State Police departments. We even had U-DOT lead us from Murray to DPG. We had Volunteer FD trucks in western OH out to guide us. We even had a prisoner transfer Police car escort in OH for a while! That's a story on its own!
 - We had almost all of our meals provided to us at little or no cost to us; not all – but most. Anyone for a hamburger, beans and potato salad?
 - We had dinner in Rochelle, IL while Generals MacArthur and Patton talked at us and Bob Hope entertained us.
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- We consumed 4,956,234 bottles of water (an estimate) and some part of 20 cases of SPAM.
 - We built a replica ¼ ton MBT from donated parts from our MVPA Vendor Community with painting & labour from the First Division Museum in Cantigny, IL. Thanks so much to Mike Fernandez who managed this project. We then towed this trailer from the First Division Museum to SF and then carried it to Evansville to be displayed during the Convention. (well, Mike – now it's time to build a jeep!)
 - We celebrated the 4th of July in a military town and had almost exclusive use of our Nation's TOP GUN school grounds – Fallon NAS.
 - We traveled on 1.1 miles of the exact same road that the original 1919 TMC team drove over. We each received an original LH brick from our friends in Gretna, NE.
 - We finished up with a HUGE Police escort into and out of San Francisco and back to the Alameda NAS. Thanks to the MVCC for the lunch @ the Western Terminus of the LH.
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- Our friends at the Alameda NAS & USS Hornet Museums hosted a great finale with a banquet, premier cot accommodations aboard the Hornet and wine & cheese with President Roosevelt aboard his “floating Whitehouse”, the USS Potomac.
 - We had some fabulous help from these folks noted below for up to 2 years in advance of this Convoy starting:
 - Dennis Boots – “spares and repairs”, outfitting the spares' trailer, identifying the Veterans' Associations along the Convoy route and preparing the Convoy Follows/Ahead sign sets.
 - Art Pope – advance party. Easy to say and very tough to do. Thanks Art for the chances to discuss this project over several lunches.
 - Wendy Rowsam – PR & website+forum maintenance with our friends at LTM. The professionalism of our site was pointed out many times.
 - Stu Entz – identifying re-fueling points
 - Muriel Shelswell – identifying our hotels at each overnight stopping point
 - Florence Simon – identifying our campsites at each overnight stopping point, and sending an intro note to many towns that we passed through.
 - Lew Ladwig, Don Chew, Bud Jaeger, Bill Campion, Craig McDonald, Sgt Mark Ounan, John Cheney Sr., Dick Antram, Clive Rowley, Eugene Phebus, Scott Lackey, Bill Kreider and Ernie Covington for their help to pre-run sections of the Convoy route in 2007, 2008 & early 2009.
 - Ian Wallace – maps. Again, easy to say with a ton of work behind it!
 - Danny & Reka Benczedi – merchandize preparation, design & supply
 - David Dorson (“relay radio”) and Preston Sewell – radio comms. David's steady voice provided the link between the front and rear of the column.
 - Chris Brown – MV safety & inspections
 - Ken Swanson & Debbie Hamilton – Museums identified
 - Toby Chandler – MVPA Sponsors
 - Lanny Moore – return trucking sources

- Rick Leenstra – identifying all the MVPA affiliates and LHA points of contacts all along the Convoy route.
- Art Lorenz – sending notes to many towns and State agencies that we traveled through
- All of our MVPA affiliate members and LHA members that had items ready for us when we arrived each day.
- We then had some more fabulous help on the Convoy, including:
 - Tim Clark – provided his place for us to drop our MVs for the days prior to the Convoy start, arranged our pre-stage location at Laurel, the Police escorts we enjoyed on MD295 to DC, Police escorts within DC and on I395 coming out of DC ... and ... provided all of the radios that we used. Thanks so much, Tim.
 - Brad Nelson – maintaining and controlling the distribution and charging of our radios and their many batteries. We never lost or wrecked one of them!
 - Our friends, the Fields & Corkums, for their unwavering maintenance support EVERY day. You guys made our Convoy one H*** of a lot easier than it could have been! Thanks.
 - Bill Kreider and Ian Wallace for their daily support on their motorcycles – many times blocking traffic when the Police didn't or running up and down the column to do what was needed. Not easy to do, but made to look easy by these 2 pros!
 - Don Hoye – who volunteered to take this assignment of taking photos and videos of our Convoy and we look forward to creating some great packages of our Convoy. We'll have a ladder truck ready @ Evansville for a group photo! ☺
 - Caroline Kline and her sister, Sister Patrick-Marie, for their daily management of our merchandize.
 - Davis Cowles who purchased and towed our spare parts / luggage trailer / inside sleeping quarters for Saul and Marc – and to Dennis and members of the local MVPA affiliate in Denton, TX for outfitting this trailer in a most professional manner.
 - Dr. Laws for his medical counsel and support each day. I am most grateful that we didn't need your help too much!
 - Our March Unit Leaders and their "tail-gunners", who on a daily basis, kept their part of our Convoy column together.
 - Chris Brown, Jack Burke and Lamar Rowland in 2 ½ ton trucks
 - Brad Nelson and Dave Abney in 5/4 ton trucks
 - Mark Sigrist and David Dorson in ¾ ton trucks
 - Frank Simon, Saul Marquez, Gary Nelson, Louis Larson, Johnny Laurence and Jim Diamond in jeeps
 - Marilyn Boots and Rudy Boydens in our chase vehicles
 - ... all the rest of you for your ability to be ready on time, have your MVs fueled and repaired for the next day ... and have a smile on your face every day!

... as we all know ... this was not a project prepared nor conducted by a couple of people over a week-end ...

... and let's remember – we didn't drive to an event in a convoy – this Convoy WAS the EVENT!

I am sure that I have missed someone – and for that I apologize.

There were things that could have been planned or executed better or simply not used or done – and we'll apply those "lessons learned" for the next one (hint).

Finally,

- Thanks to John Varner for coming upon the 1919 Convoy information and proposing that the MVPA take on such a project.
- Thanks to John Cheney for acting as our MVPA BoD Sponsor to the TMC'09 project. Thanks to you and Pam for opening your house to Ian and I for maps' preparation.
- Thanks to John Pojunos for being someone I could look to for support.
- Thanks to the MVPA BoD for their financial and overall support of this activity.
- Thanks to John Hille for driving our Dodge. Have you purchased your own Dodge 2500 with the Cummins yet? ☺
- Thanks to Benton Brown for driving my jeep day after day. Sorry I fell asleep sometimes.
- Thanks to all of our "Better Halves" for either joining us on the Convoy or ... letting us go. Sorry about the "honey-do" list that has likely followed.
- Thanks to Muriel & Ben for putting up with me during these 2 years. I think the next Convoys will be easier. Not.

Personally, this has been such a great experience that I doubt I will ever forget it. The feeling of success at a project completed in this grandest manner is something that no one can ever take away from those of us who participated.

In closing, I need your help a little! We didn't sell as much merchandize as I had planned for. Please do your part and buy some of it at the Convention and/or later when it is offered in Supply Line or on line.

Also, we're going to sell some of the TMC'09 merchandize out of the spare parts' trailer during the Convention – and I'd appreciate some TMC'09 participant help during the Convention days. Please let me know if you can "man the booth" for a while any of the days.

... Yes, that's me you feel twisting your arm! ☺

If you come across newspaper articles that may have featured the Convoy or you and your MV, please send me a copy. Thanks.

Again, thanks to all of you. It has been an honour to conduct this Convoy with you. Let's do it again – soon. (hint)

Yours, very sincerely,

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FIRST GEAR – Saturday, 9 June, 2012, 0700 hrs – some place around Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Let's plan for "Alcan Highway @ 70!"