**A Trip Down Under**

**By Dan Foulk**

In January 2014, we received a letter in the MAFCA headquarters inviting the current MAFCA President and his wife to the 23rd Australian National Model A Ford Meet to be held in Bussleton, Western Australia (W.A.) in September 2014. I wasted no time in accepting their offer.

Shelby and I arrived in Perth on Tuesday the 16th of September after flying a total of 19 hours with one four hour layover We were met by Ray and Toni Mahony our hosts for the duration of our stay. We arrived mid-afternoon, and managed to stay up until early evening, once the fatigue set in, it was time to get some sleep.

The club in Perth is, The Model A Restorers Club of Western Australia. A member of their club, Bob Newton provided a 1928 Tudor for me to drive.

Wednesday our first day was busy, I had to learn how to drive a R/H drive Model A. Ray initially drove me around a little and gave me some tips, then turned me loose with it. I did alright, but it all felt very strange. I drove it around for an hour or so, then spent the rest of the day, getting ready for the trek down to Busselton, on Thursday. Busselton W.A. is where the meet was to be held, about 130 miles South of Perth.

The weather the first two days was bright sunshine, but Thursday brought a chill in the air, and the threat of showers. The season in Australia was early spring, so it wasn’t unexpected. It showered off and on most of the way. I was doing pretty well with the R/H drive, the only problem I was having was the throttle location. On a R/H drive Model A, the foot feed is between the brake and the clutch. My foot kept going to sleep. It was a problem I had the entire time I drove the Tudor.

The meet was to be held at the Bayview Resort on the shore of the Indian Ocean, it was an excellent choice. The accommodations were 3 bedroom houses, with a shared kitchen and living area. We shared with Ray & Toni, and Alan & Edith Jeffree, the president of the W.A. club

The other conventioneers started to arrive on Friday and Saturday. As I spent more time in Western Australia, and met more of the people, I was struck not so much about how it was different, but how much it was the same. As the week went on, here in a nutshell is what I learned. Model A’ers are the same the world over, they are the best of the best, the cream of the crop. We met some of the nicest people on the planet. People that I know will be friends of ours for the rest of our lives. I think we as Americans think we have first dibs on the Model A. After visiting for two weeks, I know that isn’t true. The Aussies love their Model A’s every bit as much as we do, and their cars are just as nice.

There are a large number of Phaeton’s in the Western Australia club, out of 144 Model A’s, 42 of them are Phaetons, and 22 of them are Roadsters. Most of the Model A’s in Western Australia are 28-29’s. In Eastern Australia, just the opposite is true, most are 30-31’s. I could find no one who knows why. In the Model A era, there were large tariffs placed on fully assembled vehicles imported into Australia. They could get around the tariffs by sending the cars down there in KD (Knocked Down) format. Most of the Model A’s imported into Australia were made in Canada, special crates were built so that KD vehicles could be stacked 3 high, as long as they were open cars. That is the best theory as to why there are so many Phaetons and Roadsters in Australia.

The Phaetons were shipped from Canada with wood frames. Nearly ninety years later, some of those frames have rotted. The Aussies have an excellent solution. The majority of the trees in Australia are Eucalyptus. There are a few varieties in Australia that we don’t have in the USA. One of those is called Jarrah. Jarrah wood is extremely dense, it weighs 64 lbs per cubic foot, and is so hard that it has to be drilled before a screw can be inserted. It makes an excellent replacement frame for all those Phaetons.

The actual conventions are more extravagant than in the US. I think this is because they allowed to solicit outside sponsorship for their meets. The meet in Busselton had several outside sponsors, the most prominent being RAC, the equivalent of AAA. There is also some local state sponsorship, the thought being that these rallies are good for tourism as well as the local economy. Indeed, at the Final Awards Banquet, we sat with the Minister for Regional Development for the State of Western Australia. On Thursday of the meet, it was a requirement that all of the vehicles go to Busselton Beach to park for the day for public viewing

Every night of the meet, there is a meeting of the attendees, instructions are given for the next day’s tours, there is a mini raffle, and many door prizes. Everyone going on tour is asked to sign back in when retuning to the rally headquarters so a tally can be kept of everyone returning safely.

On the final day of the meet, Shelby and I broke off on our own, and went to Augusta. Augusta is a town in the Southwest of W.A. near a place called Cape Leeuwin. There is a lighthouse there that was built in 1895, and marks the point where the Indian and Southern Oceans come together. Both oceans are vicious there, a lighthouse is a requirement. We were driving by ourselves on this tour, there were no other Model A’s. It happened that we saw some Kangaroo’s on this jaunt, the day was rather dark and dreary, so the Kangaroos were active. Normally they are nocturnal, and seldom seen during the day. In this troop, there were about a 100 of them. The distance for this day’s tour was listed as 120 miles. One thing of note, Australia is a metric country, but all of the Model A events are given in miles, there is no metric conversion on a Model A speedometer! By the end of the week, I had driven the Tudor over 700 miles with no incident, I guess I passed the driving test.

The stated reason why the Australians invited the President of MAFCA, was because in 2004, the Model A Touring Club attended the Western Australia meet. Many friends were made at that time. The Australians want to keep this friendly relationship going. They like the Americans, it felt good. But I can honestly say, that at least this American really likes the Australians too. I hope sometime we can return the favor.