

GATEWAY GTO CRUISE TO BONNE TERRE, MO

By Gail Schott



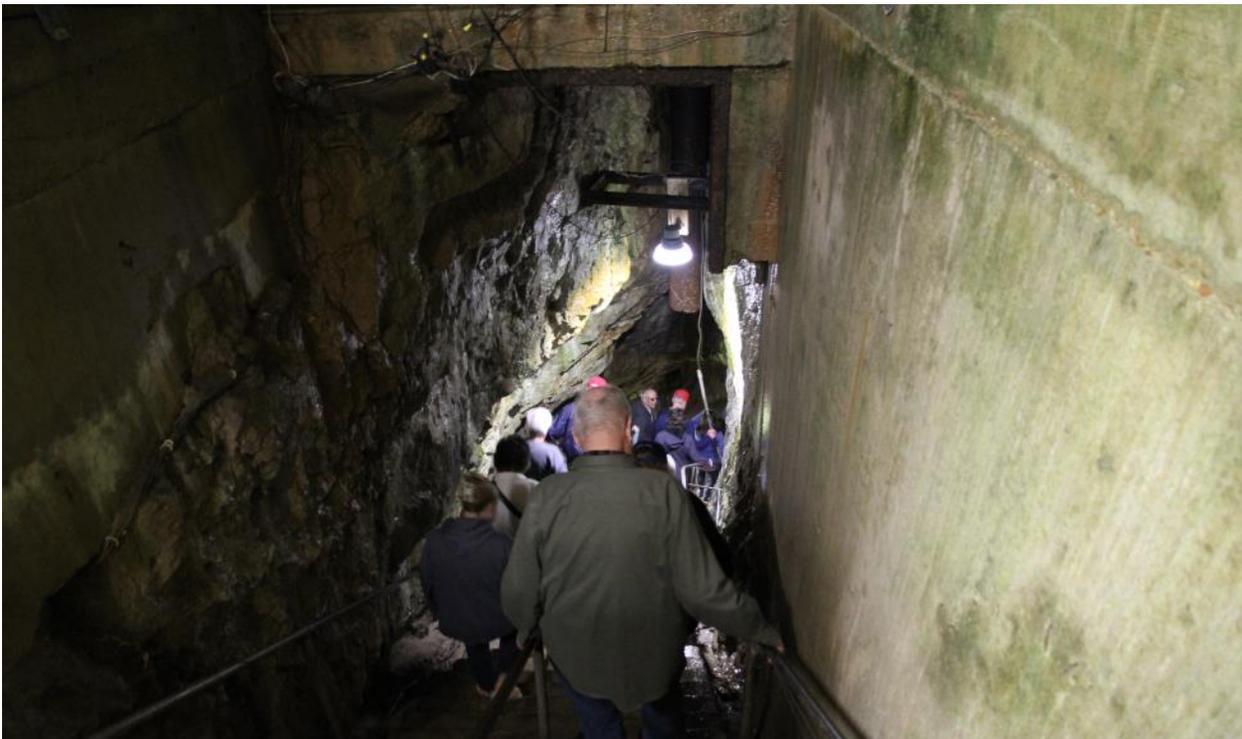
Saturday morning, April 20, turned out to be a gorgeous day for a Springtime cruise with our GTO's. The sun was bright, the air crisp enough for a light jacket, and the cars all had their shine on! Those in attendance were Schotts, O'Sullivan's, Oxlers, Winslows, Bowers, Lewis, Melrose Wildebrandts, Vies, and friends of the Schott's, Fuszners, with their black 1963 Ford Galaxie. We met at the Rt. 66 State Park Visitor's Center in Eureka, MO, lined up for a photo shoot and headed out. Well, all but *one* of us headed out! The Fuszner's '63 Galaxie had developed a fuel leak as a result of a cracked fuel pump. Some of us were coming down on them pretty hard with all of the possible terms for the F.O.R.D. acronym, like "Fix Or Repair Daily" and "Found On Road Dead"! They'd heard it all before and had a laugh with us. However, they *were* able to get a replacement, get it installed, get back on the road, and catch up with us just in time for our lunch stop. So, who's laughing now?! 😊

After lunch at Hubs Pub and Grill in Bonne Terre, where they had given us a whole room to ourselves (guess they thought we might get a little rowdy!) we drove the short distance to **The Space Museum and Grissom Center**. It was a rather small museum but was packed with NASA paraphernalia and history. One of the volunteers there, Earl, was highly informative and told us of many stories and aspects of space exploration, the astronauts, and equipment used. We enjoyed the amazing robot, Max Q. We watched as he narrated the immersive Shuttle Experience. It was unfortunate that our extended wait at lunch pushed our time schedule a little off and we wish we could have spent more time there.

The Mine at Bonne Terre was just a short walk away from The Space Museum. We left our trusty steeds at the museum and headed to the mine. A number of our group chose not to enter the non-ADA mine with its 65 wet, somewhat muddy, potentially slippery steps to enter



the mine. They were able to stay at the Space Museum and wait for the rest of us to return. We entered at the mule entrance. Never mind the chuckles and various other names used for the entrance! This was a long ramp from which in the early days of the mine the mules used to haul the galena, or lead ore, out of the mine. Then came the steps! They really weren't that bad, but it was dark, damp, and the occasional water drops would hit you, but there were hand-rails the whole way which made it much easier. We saw the many rooms that the mining operation had created, and the tall thick pillars left behind that supported the whole mine. There were rusted and dirty rock drills, railroad tracks, and ore carts. Way up high, we could see wooden slats for walkways where miners could walk or work and abandoned elevator shafts for



bringing up or sending down equipment or people.

We descended 2 levels or 200 feet until we got to the BILLION-gallon crystal clear lake below the earth's surface where we continued to learn about the history of mining. How did the



lake get there?
When the mining operations ended, the majority of the pumps were turned off and the groundwater began to flow into the mine. The mine is now the home to the world's largest subterranean lake! "West End Diving" is the current owner and operator of the mine and lake, and you have the opportunity to take scuba diving lessons and get your diving certification. There were several scuba students and classes going on during our visit and many of us were surprised to see that the typical skin-tight wet suits that you see so frequently on television shows were not that way at all. However, the tanks, masks, and flippers were all in accordance with our typical thoughts. Renowned scuba diver



Jacques Cousteau had been at the mine's lake in anticipation of a one-day dive and ended up spending 5 days exploring its many caverns and sights.

From the dock, we all donned our orange "Mae West" life jackets and boarded a pontoon boat for a short trip on the lake. The excursion took us around the limestone pillars in the largest rooms of the mine. Features of the boat tour were the No. 1 elevator shaft, submerged ore carts, wrapped pillars, and ancient abandoned overhead wooden catwalks suspended 50-100 feet above the lake. We returned to the dock and started the trek back up the steps. Once back on top, all were present and accounted for!

Our cruise continued a little further down the highway to the **Missouri Mines State Historic Site**. This was the former processing plant for lead and zinc. The plant was this huge

assortment of rusting, broken window structures and long conveyor systems. It looked as if it could be the scene for a murderous movie. Kinda spooky! We had a tour guide tell us a few things about the processing and equipment and tractors used in their operations. Terry Schott even got to operate parts of the old electric train that had been used in the mine. There was also a huge display of minerals and geodes at the processing plant. Coincidentally, one even had the shape of an arrowhead and reminded me of the Pontiac arrowhead emblem.

Those of us who chose to spend the night took off for the hotel, others hit the road for



home. We had a nice dinner at Dexter BBQ a couple of miles from the hotel. Their free soft serve ice cream was functioning at its fullest capacity and Gateway GTO folks consumed their fare share!

Sunday morning, some of us continued the spring cruise by going to Elephant Rocks State Park and the lookout tower at Taum Sauk Mountain.

It really was the perfect weekend for getting the old goats out of the garage and enjoying the ride.

