



The 79th Annual Revival AAA Glidden Tour®

By Tracy Lesher

Randy and Marge Hall with "Big Red", their 1909 Buick Model 16 Roadster.

The 79th Revival AAA Glidden Tour took place September 7–12, 2025 in Owensboro, Kentucky. Sponsored by the VMCCA, tour director Jeff Stumb put together an outstanding week of touring through the backroads and attractions of Western Kentucky. A total of 150 cars participated, with the oldest being Randy and Marge Hall's 1909 Buick Model 16 Roadster, named "Big Red".

Monday: Adventures With Audubon

On Monday morning, all 150 tour cars gathered for the start of the week. The route covered 108.5 miles. I had the pleasure of riding with Mike Romano and his buddy, Marc Burr, in Mike's 1936 Dodge Convertible. After Mike's uncle, also Mike Romano, passed away, the estate sold the car. The younger Mike Romano bought it a few short weeks before the tour. We crossed over the Ohio River early in the drive and headed to a park for coffee and donuts. After leaving the coffee stop, there was some confusion in the parking lot. Cars were coming from every direction. Later on along the route, despite the clear instructions, it seemed half of us were circling a dam—or was it a lock along Highway 60? In fact, it was both: a dam and a lock!

Our next stop was the John James Audubon Museum and Nature Center, where we enjoyed a fascinating presentation on Audubon's contributions to art and conservation. The exhibits

throughout the museum highlighted his life and work, making this stop a real highlight. Many of us were especially captivated by the session on Kentucky's native owls. We learned about the six native species—the barred, Eastern screech, great horned, saw-whet, short-eared, and barn owls—along with visitors like snowy and long-eared owls. The presenter explained the unique calls of each bird (great horned owls hoot while barn owls scream), described the specialized feathers that enable silent flight, and mentioned the role of owl pellets in conservation studies. Best of all, we met Miss Owlivia, an Eastern screech owl, who serves as an ambassador for the nature center, and a lively barred owl who nearly escaped the grasp of her handler during the demonstration.

The afternoon drive provided more adventures. We came across Wayne Scites, who had pulled over due to fuel trouble. His 1929 Pierce-Arrow's gas gauge decided to quit working. Wayne thought he had more fuel than he did and ran out of "go". Wayne found himself stranded until an unlikely rescuer—a local driving a beat-up Toyota Corolla—offered him a gas can. Later in the day, Mike's Dodge developed a problem with its voltage regulator, forcing us to modify our route back to Owensboro. By the end of the day, the AAA rollback drivers had been busy with six rescues.





2025 VMCCA Revival AAA Glidden Tour® cars headed into Ben Hawes Park for coffee and donuts.

John Audubon Nature Center Ambassador Ms. Owlivia and her handler.



Wayne Scites' 1929 Pierce-Arrow.

Tuesday: Reo and a Rollover

Tuesday's route covered 114.7 miles. Initially the plan was to cross the Blue Bridge over the Ohio River. With it closed due to construction work, we were rerouted over a big bridge into Indiana—complete with a U-turn to get us back on track. The tour route led us to the small town of Reo (spelled just like the car!), where we stopped at the Holiday Drive-In for coffee and donuts. With six screens, it was one of the largest drive-in theaters I've ever seen, and it made for a nostalgic backdrop with our cars parked in front of the main movie screen.

Along the way at 27.8 miles into the day, Mike's 1936 Dodge rolled over to 80,000 miles. We pulled over so I could capture the moment on video, complete with Mike and Marc doing a victory dance around the car. Some passersby thought we were having mechanical trouble and asked if we needed help. A little further on, we crossed the historic one-lane Hatfield Bridge, an excellent spot for photos.

Lunch was lively, with entertainment from the Blue Bridge Boys—a teenage bluegrass band whose members, ranging in age from 13 to 15, played with remarkable skill on banjo, guitar, bass, drums, and keyboard. Their energy and talent were a hit with the crowd.

After lunch the group drove to Evansville, Indiana, and landed near the airport. During WWII Evansville became a leader in

My press car entourage for Tuesday: Marc Burr (left) and Mike Romano (right) with Mike's 1936 Dodge Four-door Convertible at the Holiday Drive-in.



A monumental occasion! Mike Romano's 1936 Dodge Four-door convertible rolled over 80,000 miles.

WWII fighter plane production. As we entered the Evansville Wartime Museum grounds, there were photo ops in front of the *Hoosier Spirit II*, a WWII P-47 Thunderbolt fighter plane. After its storied military career, this aircraft was renamed in honor of its home state. The museum featured historic planes, exhibits, and a parachute wedding gown. Many of us enjoyed posing for photos in front of the museum's aircraft and vehicle collection, and a few tried their hand at the flight simulator. The 50-mile return trip to Owensboro was smooth, with only one car needing AAA assistance that day.



EVANSVILLE WARTIME MUSEUM



2025 VMCCA President Duane Copley with his 1932 Plymouth at the Evansville Wartime Museum.

Glidden Freshmen, Annie Carter and Tyler Rhodes.



Newlyweds Adrienne and John Nikodym pose with the parachute wedding gown display.



Wednesday: A Rainy Start and Santa Claus, Indiana

Wednesday's 88-mile route began with a bit of drizzle, but I was cautiously optimistic. I even helped Rand Patterson put the top up on his 1915 Ford Model T hoping that Murphy's Law might go into effect. And just like that, the rain stopped. Good omen, I thought. Since Mike was having trouble with his Dodge, I rode in the rumble seat of Laura Mulvaney's 1931 Ford Model A, along with her friend Nadine Otterman. Laura has owned her car for just 18 months and has already logged over 4,000 miles. It's a sharp looking driver.

Leaving Owensboro, we ended up on "that darn big bridge" again over the Ohio River while trailing behind Randy and Marge Hall in Big Red. Randy is Laura's dad. Our first stop was at the Lincoln Pioneer Village in Rockport, Indiana, where coffee and donuts awaited us. The village was charming, with multiple buildings tracing Kentucky's history. Even the mayor of Rockport came out to welcome us.

As we prepared to leave, the rain was back, and this time, heavier. As much fun as it was being in the "Girls only car" I was not looking forward to climbing back into Laura's rumble seat with my short legs. Thankfully, Priscilla Hopkins and Bob Nunnink came to my rescue, and I rode along in Bob's 1938 Ford Four-door Convertible with Priscilla at the wheel. With the top up, we stayed dry while enjoying a beautiful run along the Ohio River and miles of soybean and cornfields on the way to Santa Claus, Indiana.

Randy and Marge nearly ran out of gas en route to the Santa Claus Museum; it's always an adventure when your carburetor is gravity-fed! They backed up a hill and rolled into a driveway. Luckily, a kind homeowner supplied them with fuel and sent them on their way. In Santa Claus, many visitors wrote letters to Santa, which will all be answered in due time. The Howell brothers marked the day with matching shirts, and for brother Gary, this was his first Glidden Tour. Along the way to lunch, we spotted a "dead" locomotive sitting silent by the tracks.

After lunch some of us made the optional stop at Lincoln's boyhood home, just as the sun finally broke through. The return

Right before the rain fell in Rockport, Indiana.



Left to right: Wade Smith, Bob Nunnink, and Priscilla Hopkins stand outside the Lincoln Pioneer Village.

trip wound us back to Owensboro through wooded country roads and farmland. During the evening group dinner, Patricia "Pat" Swigart, the Dean of Freshmen, conducted Freshman Graduation, where 70 Freshmen Revival AAA Glidden Tour® participants were officially welcomed. This was Pat's thirty-third year, leading the initiation rites and ushering in the next generation of tour regulars. The 70 freshmen chicken-danced around the banquet room. All passed their hazing rituals.





The Howell Brothers left to right at the Santa Claus Museum: Craig, Rick, and Gary wore matching shirts.

Thursday: A Big Mileage Day to Squire Boone Caverns

Thursday was a long one—163.5 miles in total. I joined Marty Roth in his spectacular 1941 Cadillac since his wife, Dale, wasn't up to navigating. What a car! I felt like a movie star riding in it. We set out at 8:00 a.m. bound for Squire Boone Caverns in Indiana.

The route was well-planned, with Jeff Stumb promising that, despite the mileage, it wouldn't feel like a marathon day. And he was right—we enjoyed long, sweeping runs off the main highways, passing tobacco drying in barns and paralleling the Ohio River near Hawesville. A highlight along the way was a stop at the Judge Joseph Holt House, a site tied to Abraham Lincoln. An ally of our 16th President of the United States, Holt convicted Lincoln's assassination conspirators.

Crossing the Ohio River again into Indiana, we eventually arrived at Squire Boone Caverns, named after Daniel Boone's brother. Squire and Daniel discovered the caverns in 1790. Squire and his family settled in the area. He remained there until his death in 1815 and Squire's remains are interred in the caverns. The guided tours were fascinating, covering both geology and pioneer history. We also went panning for gold!

The return drive wasn't without its challenges—namely one very steep hill. Richard Demers' 1932 Dodge Brothers DK8 equipped with a gravity-fed carburetor doggedly climbed that hill. Once back to Owensboro, Marty and I stopped for non-ethanol gas along with some other tourists. For entertainment, we watched another tourist tow a two-tone convertible roadster with nothing but a short strap—a sight that made a few of us nervous!



Megan Ayers writes her letter to Santa.



Revival AAA Glidden Tour® Director Jeff Stumb and Dean of Freshmen Patricia Swigart welcome all to the Freshmen Banquet.





Marty and Dale Roth's 1941 Cadillac Convertible.

A drone shot of the lawn at the Judge Joseph Holt House.

