



Watkins Glen
Vintage Festival Tour
September 10 -13, 2015

You Followed That Miata!





After the Watkins Glen Vintage Racing Festival Tour

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* These articles also appeared in October 2016's Miata Miles.



Watkins Glen Vintage Festival Tour

The Tour and What's Ahead

This is the second of two volumes concerning the 2015 Watkins Glen Vintage Festival Tour. What happened, what went right, and what went wrong is related. Some of the pictures contributed by Team Trillium are included. This volume also contains three independent reports; Rose Stipanitz's article on Autocross, Michael Greene's on Driving and Eating (both of which appeared in October 2015's Miata Miles), and, Gary Svoboda's article on the Wonderful Waterfall Tour which is exclusive to this volume.

As was the case with the first volume, a printed copy goes to Watkins Glen Vintage Festival Tourists. Both volumes along with pre trip Newsletters are posted on the web-site for any member of the club to download if he or she wants a copy. However printed copies are not provided to those that weren't part of the tour.

In this book, each day is described as it unfolded. Compare this to what was actually planned by consulting "Follow That Miata" which provides considerable plan details.

By lunch time Friday, there was talk about the Trillium Club returning to Watkins Glen next year. This could be during the Vintage Festival or at some other time. This year's tour was a one time event. It was unique in that:

- Mazda was the favoured Marque
- there was no Vintage Race at the same time as the Festival which is normally the case, because the track was closed for repaving and,
- there were special events on Saturday and Sunday organized only because there was no racing. These are not likely to be offered in the future

This was the first Trillium event when all four extant Miata generations participated, it was also my first event as organizer, and without question the most over-documented Trillium event ever. I enjoyed it and I think all involved enjoyed themselves as well.

What about future tours to Watkins Glen and the Finger Lakes region? Here are outlines of two possible scenarios

Festival Vintage Racing Tour

If we toured next year while the Festival was on, (September 8 - 11, 2016) the town would be a lot busier. There would be vintage racing at WGI and the experience would be more like what I and other Trillium members have enjoyed over the years. There would also be a wider variety and many more vintage sports cars on the streets.

We wouldn't be able to stay at The Glen Motor Inn, traditionally unavailable because of their racing clientele. In some respects is not a loss. Where we would stay doesn't have the history or patina of the Motor Inn but there would really not be a limit on the number of cars that could join the tour. The Watkins Glen Harbor Hotel is a lot newer, more

comfortable and closer to downtown although it might be more expensive. Additional costs may not be a major consideration; I'm sure we could negotiate a deal. A distinct advantage is that you could leave your car parked here and walk about town.

For those that enjoyed the Tour de Marque there is another Stone Bridge driving event that we could join. The Knapp Vineyards Sporting Roadster Tour would be similar in that it starts at a vineyard and covers perhaps different roads but does include two laps of the old course and special parking in downtown Watkins Glen after the tour is over. There's already information on the Festival's web-site about this event.

The big difference on Saturday and Sunday is that there's racing next year. On Saturday there's also the opportunity to drive a couple of laps on WGIR. I don't think the SCCA Autocross that was a feature this year will happen next year. That course was set up in an area that has traditionally been paddock, filled with racing cars, giant motor homes and race car transporters.

Non Festival Tour

Another option is a mid week tour which would be a lot quieter but might provide better access to the track for laps, or a weekend tour when racing is not scheduled. There are plenty of really nice roads to explore. We have a very valuable resource in the area; someone who specializes in organizing tours who has volunteered to help us. We would have to entertain ourselves, which we usually do on tours rather than rely on organizations such as the Festival (and every one else in Schuyler County) to present us with interesting options.

No matter what we do, it's not far to Watkins Glen, there are lots of nice Miata roads, and we can all have fun exploring a really interesting area. Whatever we decide to do, I'm in.

I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone for coming and supporting me. Thanks to those who submitted their pictures; I'm sorry I couldn't use them all. On the road, group leaders Carol with Val and Michael, sweeps Dennis with Dona, Gary and Leah, and Liz who kept everyone safe and on course (except for me who got lost in the very early minutes of the first stage).

I also want to thank Rose, Michael and Gary for submitting articles for this book and most importantly thanks to Gary Svoboda who assisted and gave me the moral support and confidence to proceed and develop a tour that would succeed.



A shop window on Franklin Street. Photo by Larry Whitney

What happened on Wednesday (the early arrivals)

Some of us were really keen. We wanted to make sure we wouldn't miss anything on Thursday morning and didn't have a Nexus cards. We had experienced delays at the border, so we decided to ensure we'd be at the Museum on time by arriving the previous day. So far everything was going to plan.

Those of us who were staying at the Holiday Inn Buffalo Downtown decided to eat at the Anchor Bar, the place famous for the invention of Buffalo Wings. The bar, conveniently located just a couple of short blocks from the hotel was an easy walk away. However, Carol and I didn't quite make it. We had tickets for "The Alchemist" in Stratford. We would have arrived on time if most of the border gates weren't closed. Not only were we delayed at the border, despite the clear directions and map, we got lost between the border and the hotel. We missed a turn and took an additional 15 minutes to arrive after we had crossed the border. (It was dark, OK?) We aren't going to book a show at Stratford during Watkins Glen Vintage Festival week next year just in case there's another tour.

As we drove to the hotel then walked to the Anchor Bar, I couldn't help but think about the last time I was in downtown Buffalo. It was in the early '50s and Buffalo was the place to go. Now, it seems frozen in time. Even in the dark, the architecture compels us to visit Buffalo; a place that beckons from the past. Yes Virginia, it seems that time travel is indeed possible.

Fortunately, those that did eat at the Anchor, brought us a doggie bag, meeting us as they were returning from the hotel while we made our way to the restaurant. We didn't starve!

We were all feeling that we were embarking on a great adventure and also celebrating the fact that Kirk's ND had been delivered just the day before the start of the tour, cutting it very close to the wire. When Kirk first announced that he had ordered a next generation MX-5, we were all thinking that the Watkins Glen Tour would be the first Trillium event with all four generations of the best sports car in the world represented. As the event came closer rumours of delivery delays became a reality. It looked like Kirk would be driving his NA. (He had already sold his NC to his brother.) Kirk was obviously disappointed but wouldn't let that spoil his enjoyment of the tour. It wasn't just Kirk who had been looking forward to having his ND join the tour; many hoped he would have his car and expressed their frustration with the delay that Kirk had experienced. However, all was not lost; a call the prior Thursday had changed everything. He was told his car would be ready for delivery on Tuesday, the day before the start of the tour.

To bed with the lot of us.

What happened on Thursday. . . .

We who arrived Wednesday had breakfast and left the hotel in plenty of time. I couldn't find my directions then there was construction. Not only that, but the time for our guided tour of the Buffalo Transportation Pierce Arrow had changed. I neglected to pass this vital piece of information on which resulted in some anxiety.

The museum exceeded expectations. This growing museum will be the largest of its kind in the world when completed. The Frank Lloyd Wright gas station was spectacular. Shiny copper eyes served as gasoline reservoirs replacing the old hand operated pumps with under ground storage. The radical design was planned to cost \$700 per station to build but never got off the ground because the architect demanded a \$1,700 royalty for each station built. Jim Sandoro, the owner of the museum bought the design rights from Wright's family for \$250,000 and built the station to the original specifications but it is indoors in a specially designed building. To facilitate the museum's expansion, a street is to be closed and the existing building will be joined to a newly acquired building right across the street from Chef's restaurant where we dined.



An early Pierce Arrow Motorcycle. Pierce Arrow cars had a common characteristic; head lamps mounted on the top of the fenders. Photos by Larry Whitney



Chef's Restaurant is the finest Italian restaurant in Buffalo and it is conveniently located next to the museum. We left our cars in the Museum parking lot, walked a block and were ushered into the French Connection room. Huge bibs tied around our necks kept us nice and tidy and the food was great and reasonably priced. To get really fast service it was decided that there would be only one check for the food on a menu à fixe. We would be underway without fuss.



*Driver's meeting in the museum's parking lot.
Photo by Larry Whitney*

I led the first group swept by Dennis and Dona, Michael Darragh subbed in the second for Kirk who had yet to figure out how to use his brand new ND's GPS was swept by Gary and Leah. The third group was led by Carol and Val, and of course super sweep Liz Burns did her thing.

I immediately lost my way driving around a block twice before recovering. I'd been there before so really had no excuse. I developed the route and made the maps but still managed to get lost! Once we got on the highway we were fine and we arrived at our stop in Dansville in good time. Route 20A was really nice; very little traffic with a good surface. The weather? Perfect!

In Dansville we had a problem. Jim and Holly Walker were directly behind me as we entered town, then they weren't. Holly cried "Flat" on her CB but I didn't hear her; I should have because we were very close. This kind of thing happens too often with CB transceivers. Due to the way the 11 meter band propagates and locally generated radio frequency noise users tend to turn their squelch control up too high to protect themselves from aggravating noise. The result of this is that a really strong signal is required to break the squelch. Temporary or badly located antennae exacerbate the situation resulting in no communication and total frustration for a person crying for help. In this case, Jim and Holly were across the street and only a block behind us when our group arrived at our scheduled stop. They had driven over a rock destroying a tire and damaging a wheel.

The first group left Dansville on their way to Watkins Glen thinking that we would be lucky to see Jim and Holly the next day. We were wrong. By the time the third group was ready to leave Dansville for the Glen, Jim and Holly had a new tire installed and balanced! Pretty amazing.

We all arrived safely at the Glen Motor Inn in plenty of time to have a break before dinner in the Inn's Lounge. After dinner Carol and I said goodbye to our fellow dauntless Miata drivers and returned to The Tudor Rose our Bed & Breakfast in downtown Watkins Glen.

By the way, there's a short clip of Victor Franzese, patriarch of the Glen Motor Inn and a Vintage Racing driver in his 'mid 70s, driving on the WGIR in his McLaren M12 in 2011 on the Glen Motor Inn's web-site <http://www.glenmotorinn.com>



Glen Motor Inn. Photo by Larry Whitney

What happened on Friday. . . .



*Early morning over Lake Seneca from a Glen Motor Inn balcony.
Photo by Ed Preston*

Most of us drove to the Chateau Lafayette Reneau Winery for the Tour de Marque early on Friday. Almost 120 cars including 27 Canadians gathered early in the morning on a slope on the east side of Lake Seneca. All Miata generations were represented as well as a Mazda3 RX-7s, RX-8s and a sprinkling of other undefined Mazdas. It was here that I discovered that the ND sold in Canada has two features that the equivalent US model doesn't have; a limited slip differential and a shock tower brace. An American I was conversing with told me he was thinking of buying his car in Canada. Although the car is more expensive in Canada, the relatively more powerful American dollar equalizes things.

The police closed the highway as we started the tour. It didn't take long for the big groups that left the winery to become fragmented. This time I didn't lead but we got off the route pretty quickly but recovered before going too far off course. Great (and I mean designed for Miatas) roads with beautiful scenery compels me to imagine another tour to this region. We arrived at WGIR (Watkins Glen International Raceway) in time for lunch. Some participated in a mini autocross before parking near the new press building where we enjoyed lunch. Look at all the Mazdas! Most were Miatas with a smattering of other cars, and a truck!



Driver's meeting at Chateau Lafayette Reneau winery before the start of the Tour de Marque. Photo by Larry Whitney

After lunch, which included another "driver's meeting" we made our way to Watkins Glen to drive two laps on the original course. In the meeting they told us to consider this: roads intersecting with the old course would be open and provide access for cars not involved in the tour. I don't remember this happening as we drove. It seems to me that there were pickup trucks parked across the roads that intersected with the course. This part of the run was fun, especially along Franklin Street where spectators cheered us on. Most of us weren't aware of the tradition, and not expecting it, were amazed. I don't know where else you could have such an experience driving your Miata on public roads.

I ordered two pictures of my car on the course from Highland Design Studio who photographed each car three times as it traversed the course. One of my pictures is of Carol and me on the Stone Bridge in my Miata. The other is my car at Milliken's Corner followed by Gary Svoboda's 10th Anniversary Special Edition. No, we weren't driving at racing speeds, but we're all having fun.

After two laps of the course we parked on the grass at Lafayette Park and spent the rest of the afternoon wandering about taking in the atmosphere of the festival. Later, most of us went to Seneca Lodge for dinner. The Lodge is as old as racing is in Watkins Glen. It has character, great food and service and an interesting history. We were lucky that we were able to sit together in two groups without having to wait. On race weekends, this would have been almost impossible. Some of us went to see the fireworks after dinner but found that it had already happened by the time we got there. We weren't aware of the schedule change. Even with great organizing skills exemplified by the Festival, things happen to screw things up.



*Waiting for the start of the Tour de Marque.
Photo by Carol Ketchum*



Lunch break to the WGI Press Building. Look at all the Mazdas including a truck. Photo by Carol Ketchum



The original course on Watkins Glen's Franklin Street with spectators encouraging Mazda drivers Photo by Joan Whitney



Dennis and Dona approaching the Stone Bridge following Gary and Marilyn Helmer on the heels of another Trillium club Stone Bridge Driver. Photo by Dona Allard.

Paul and Carol crossing the Stone Bridge. Photo by Highland Studio



Paul negotiating Milliken's Corner (without rolling his faithful steed) followed by Gary Svoboda and a zoom of Miatas driving the original race course at Watkins Glen. Photo by Highland Studio

What happened on Saturday

I slept in. This happens from time to time, but rarely has any impact. This time it did. First of all the perfect weather we had experienced on Thursday and Friday had gone, replaced by rainy dull weather. I had registered for the Wonderful Waterfall Wander and decided to get my passes and routing before breakfast or I'd miss out. I got to the park too early. The only other car there was an MG A. (It probably arrived the night before. I never thought of the MG A as an early morning car.) I was looking for Terrie Sautter and she wasn't there.

After a while, cars started turning up and I discovered that Terrie had arrived and was letting cars into the park so I went to meet her. We chatted as she passed out vouchers, then we returned to the park for her driver's meeting. By that time Trillium Club members had arrived.

When the meeting was over, I returned to my B&B for breakfast. By that time, it became quite apparent that I wasn't going to do the Wonderful Waterfall Tour. There was plenty of water falling from the sky and I really didn't feel up to a long drive. Besides, I considered that we could do the waterfall tour the next time we came to the Glen. I had the route after all. We didn't want to not do something so Carol and I drove up to the track to see what Rose was up to and cheer her on.

Cold. Windy. Wet. Despite the conditions there was some amazing driving, mostly by Miatas. We looked for Rose but couldn't find her although we did find her car with its fully soaked contents piled behind it. We intended to hang out but couldn't stay; it didn't take long for us to return to our base for warmer dryer clothes. We returned to the track better able to watch the Autocross just as Rose was taking her break.

The afternoon drizzled into evening while we gathered in the Man Cave, Dave's Garage (no, not that Dave) for a Fish Fry. One of our B&B guests, Frankie, caught the fish. His wife Betty, prepared it. We all contributed to the meal and sat around the well appointed garage; more like a large family room/den than your typical garage but with an Alfa Romeo Graduate parked on one side.

Before this, most of the club's tour participants followed Gary on the Wonderful Waterfall Tour to many of, if not all, the falls on the itinerary. Others visited the International Racing Research Centre or did other fun things. There's certainly lots to do here.



Paul taking a picture of Rose's car; ready for competition with the class and number taped on the side, floor mats and contents of the trunk drenched by the Waterfall-ing from the sky. It seems that everybody participated in the Wonderful Waterfall even if they hadn't signed up for the tour! Photo by Carol Ketchum.

What happened on Sunday

The Legends Brunch was cancelled. Most of the Trillium participants started their drive home. Kirk washed his car. A few of us stayed for Retrace the Race in downtown Watkins Glen. This was originally to start at 12.00 but was moved up because the brunch was cancelled. We (Paul and Carol) joined Kirk and Pauline, and Larry and Joan on the walk a bit late because we weren't aware of the schedule change. This very interesting walk around downtown Watkins Glen stopped at sites where some very important events occurred over 60 years ago. The docents recounted stories of famous people they met as youngsters relating tales of Briggs Cunningham at one garage, and other notables as we explored other significant places.

At what was once a Chevrolet dealership, they told of how the Corvette was conceived, and how a man who knew GM's Harley Earl convinced him to bring an experimental car to the Glen that ultimately evolved to become America's Sports Car.

The importance of Milliken, who I thought of just as a race car driver was recounted. Here was a man who had a great impact on aeronautics, the auto industry, held many patents, was instrumental in the design and development of WGIR, and in his 90s, still fielded calls from GM and Nissan as a consultant.

After the inspiring walk we drove over the hills to Hammondsport where we met Jim and Holly Walker at the Glenn H(ammond). Curtiss Museum where examples of a much earlier aircraft developer's accomplishments were on display. This is a fine museum with a large restoration shop open to the public. Projects can be discussed with conservators restoring artefacts using period tools.



When the museum closed we drove to Snug Harbour, a restaurant a short distance away on the west shore of Keuka Lake. After dinner we returned to Watkins Glen for another night. Holly and Jim, Larry and Joan, Kirk and Pauline drove home the next morning. Carol and I drove to Corning to visit the Corning Museum of Glass, an absolutely amazing revelation.

We left Watkins Glen early Tuesday morning making our way to Niagara-on-the-Lake to continue with the theatrical bookends of our trip. We arrived home after ten days on the road following Gary's TGIF.

The Glenn H. Curtiss Museum photos on this page and photos on the previous page by Larry Whitney



Snug Harbor photo by Carol Ketchum.



Autocross at Watkins Glen - Rose Stipanitz

I'm sure many of our club members have driven autocross, and they will know just how much fun it is. For those of you who have never tried it – here is a novice's point of view.

The Autocross event was run by the SCAA (Sports Car Club of America) and I must say I was very impressed with how well it was organized. Their organization and safety procedures made me feel very comfortable trying this for the first time.

I discovered you have to wear a helmet. From the SCAA web site I determined which class of helmet was required and went shopping. Although they said you could borrow a helmet – that old idea of someone else's Cooties just turned me off. Besides I can use the helmet for our Go Kart Racing meeting in December.

I found a helmet that fit, but the reality is that they fit so snugly that I couldn't get my glasses on after the helmet was on my head. And I certainly couldn't put the helmet on while I was still wearing my glasses so... how do I get my glasses to fit into the sides of the helmet. My solution was to wear the helmet around the house for a few hours and stick 2 chop sticks into the sides to create grooves for my glasses to slide into. It worked. Although having to explain to my friend who dropped by while I had chop sticks stuck into the sides of my helmet was worth a few good belly laughs.

On Saturday morning, the clouds were heavy and dark with rain. I headed up to Watkins Glen International for registration at 8 in the morning. They were running the course in the paddock areas of the track.

At registration they had you sign a couple of waivers and handed you a roll of masking tape and told you your car number and class. You had to use the tape to put the numbers and class on both sides of your car. You will notice I had a lot of trouble with the letter S. My number and class was 008 STS. Needless to say I was a little embarrassed by the result, but remember by this time it was raining hard.

Then you had to empty everything out of your car before the Tech inspection. And I mean everything, including your floor mats. Nothing left to fly around the car while you were zooming around those sharp corners on the track. Everyone made a pile of their stuff in the staging parking lot. As you moved around during the day your stuff stayed put and got really really wet in the rain.

The Tech inspections included your tires, brakes, suspension and a check under the hood for any modifications and to make sure your battery was locked in solid.



Rose is obviously having too much fun. Photo by Carol Ketchum

We had the drivers meeting around 9:30 a.m. and SCAA was really great at making you feel comfortable about messing up while you were on the track. If you spun out, stopped, killed or knocked over cones, you just finished the course anyway. Their approach was that it was good practice. The whole idea was to go out and have fun.

At the driver's meeting we were assigned our work locations and rest periods and run times.

Then you got a chance to walk the course. Like that was going to help me! I ended up walking with a gentlemen who was in position to take first or second place in the years' championship. He was most helpful and very giving of his knowledge and experience. He explained how to read the cones, directions, walls etc. in hopes that you would be able to see the lanes to drive in. Let me tell you that walking the course and driving it are two totally different things. Also there was a 7 hour gap for me between the time I walked the course and actually got to drive it. I can't remember what I did, saw, or said 3 minutes ago.

I started the day working on the track at Station #2 which was on the track right by the shalom course. Your job was to stand in the pouring rain and pick up cones when they were knocked over and replace them. Watch each car to see if they went off course and call it in on the radio, or waive a red flag to stop cars on the track if the safety officer called a safety concern.

By this time the rain was coming down pretty hard. I had brought extra clothes so I layered up. 4 layers on the top and 2 pair of pants. All the clothes I owned that weekend, I wore. Unfortunately I brought driving shoes only – which are thin soled and cloth topped. I felt like I was standing in a puddle of water all day.

Also while you were “marshalling” the course you couldn't sit down. In case a car lost it you had to be able to run out of its way.

This first class of cars took 2 ½ hours to run. Each car got 4 double runs of the track.

In spite of the cold and wet I was so excited watching each car take it's run that I lost track of time. The only reminder was my wet feet. I learned a lot just watching all the other cars run. PS – you had to run away from the big splashes as the cars came through some pretty big puddles.

Of course watching the other Miata's was the most fun. There were a couple of really good drivers out there that really showed what the car could do. They looked so quick and nimble.

My opinion was the water on the track was only going to help me, because it meant that you had to drive it a little slower, but that didn't stop other drivers from going full throttle. There were lots of spin outs and even some stalls. Cones were knocked over or dragged under cars, or locked onto front bumpers to continue the rest of the run with the car. That explained why every work station had extra cones ready to replace those who gave their lives during the day.

My work break was followed by a rest break for about 2 hours. As I headed back to the parking area I ran into Paul and Carol who had dropped by to check out the action. I didn't spend too much time chatting as I really needed a hot coffee and some food. I got in my car and headed for Dunkin Donuts. I think Paul and Carol may have watched a few runs in the rain, but I didn't see them at the track later that day.

At Dunkin Donuts I got down a coffee and something that resembled French toast with 2 fried eggs and bacon in the middle. That was enough protein and carbs to keep me going for the rest of the day. Then I headed to the ladies room, which was closed – so off to the men’s room. While there I took off my shoes and one at a time put my feet into the sink and ran hot water over them. Do you get the feeling I was a little cold. I know it’s probably not proper bathroom protocol, but I was way beyond being polite at that point.

Then I headed back to the track to get ready to run the course. There were about 25 cars in each group so there was a fair amount of time spent in your car in the line up waiting for your turn. That gave me lots of time to get my helmet on and wiggle my glasses through the chop stick grooves. It was still a bit of a challenge.

The rain pounded, the fog rolled in, then cleared, and then rolled in again. At one point they held the course waiting for the fog to clear. I spent most of my time in line trying to keep my windows from fogging up.

Then it happened – I was at the starting position. The flag dropped and I was off.

I felt nothing. No fear, no anxiety. I was just aiming my car at the first set of cones to get into the lane. All the while trying to remember to keep my head up and look ahead to the next directional change. There’s no point in worrying about what is currently happening – it’s too late – all you can do is focus forward.

There were few straight lines so I only got into 3rd gear once. Most of the run was at the top end of second gear. The rain pounded, the cones and lanes came in and out of view and then I was heading for the shalom. I missed the entry the first time round, but just headed for the next turn. Then before you knew it you were out of the shalom and heading towards a 180 turn into the centre of the course. Round the middle of the course, then back out to the edge. Straight up the back end of the course to line up to run it a second time in sequence.

My brain was firing faster than my car and my lips were glued to my gums because I couldn’t stop smiling. Hard left, hard right – never taking your hands out of the 3 and 9 position.....then you were out the shoot and screaming to a stop just pas the timing lights and it was over.

I didn’t know how to feel anything other than total joy. Couldn’t remember what I did right, or what I did wrong, but was exhilarated and exhausted. I didn’t hit any cones, or spin out. That probably means I wasn’t going fast enough.

I calmed myself in the line-up and took some deep breaths and still fought to keep my windows from fogging up while I waited for my second run.

The second run was pretty much the same as the first, but about 12 seconds faster. I didn’t realize I was going that slowly in my first run and the second did feel better. I still blew the entrance to the shalom – my brain and eyes just couldn’t see the entry point.

I think I hooped and hollered a bit when it was all over. Can’t remember that either.

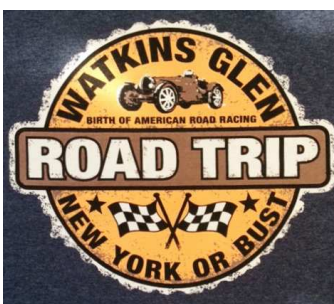
Then it was time to clean up the course and put everything away. With so many people helping it only took about another 20 minutes in the rain to get it all put away.

Then back to my pile of stuff (really wet stuff) in the staging area to put my car back together and head back to the hotel. I ran my feet under hot water in the tub for another 20 minutes and borrowed some dry clothes from a club member so I could grab a bite of dinner.

To sum things up it was about 7 hours of working, waiting and getting wet for about 6 minutes of fun. It was worth every minute of wet agony, and I can't wait to do it again.



Rose's car patiently waiting for her to ride him on the Autocross course. Photo by Carol Ketchum.



Mickey and Michael enjoying the tour. Photo by Michael Greene

Driving and Eating our way around the Finger Lakes - *Michael Greene*

We attended the Vintage Grand Prix Festival weekend tour in Watkins Glen that Paul organized and wanted to share some highlights. Mostly about where we ate!

Although most of the group met at the Pierce-Arrow Museum to kick off the tour, we decided to skip that and join everyone for Lunch at Buffalo's iconic Chef's Restaurant. Killer Spaghetti Parmesan in our own hockey-themed "French Connection" room (Buffalo Sabres memorabilia extraordinaire) bode well for things ahead, especially on the food front!

We drove, top down, in 3 groups (slow, faster and fastest) to Watkins Glen from there. We were in the fastest group, which mostly meant we did not stop for gas, and enjoyed non-Interstate roads under solid leadership by Carol and Val and kept in line by legendary sweep, Liz Burns.

The first night we met at the Glen Motor Inn (resting a bit on its past laurels) for a Buffet dinner and get-to-know one another. Fresh air and long drives meant pretty early to bed.

Friday morning we headed off to the Chateau Lafayette Winery to stage ourselves, among 120 other Mazda's (99% Miata's) for the Tour De Marque tour around the Finger Lakes area...winding up at the famous Watkins Glen International raceway for Lunch. After lunch, we staged our cars again, for the 2 laps around the old course, which would allow us to call ourselves Stone Bridge Drivers!

This was an opportunity to drive the 'original' road course that predates the permanent track. And, includes runs through the 'closed off' downtown streets of Watkins Glen while pedestrians cheer you on (sort of nonplussed, preferring the louder, rarer cars to come!) from the sidewalks!

That evening, Paul Whittaker arranged a dinner for everyone at Seneca Lodge which was a great spot. Famous for its prime rib, and packed to the gills, by the time Mickey and me got there (and were seated) the prime rib was Sold Out ! Apparently, the word got out to our fellow TMC members who feared I might starve to death, and lo and behold, a medium-rare portion (too much for her) arrived at my table courtesy of Rose Stipantz! How sweet was that?

On Saturday we decided to forego any organized tours and did our own thing. Starting with a hike (10,00 step as per Fit Bit) through Watkins Glen State Park to see the spectacular gorge and waterfalls. From there, we drove to the Windmill Market (like a St Jacobs Market, complete with Amish baked goods) in Penn Yan, and for Lunch at the Penn Yan Diner (told " You Gotta Eat Here") and then ended up in Elmira hitting some big box stores to kill the rest of a rainy day. Early that evening, we watched the rest of the Jays -Yankees double header in the room and had a drink with the gang in our Motel's pub before heading downtown to Nickel's Pit BBQ for some real southern BBQ.

Sunday, we headed home, the faster way (still raining) along the I-90, with a pit stop at Walden Galleria Buffalo. Did I mention The Cheesecake Factory is there?

Kudos to Paul for the stellar job of organizing this tour. We made new friends and strengthened other friendships. Looking forward to more tours next season!

The Wonderful Waterfalls Tour - Gary Svoboda

Saturday morning at Watkins Glen dawned cool and damp after the glorious sun of Friday, and the weather forecast was not promising, but that did not stop us from our plans to enjoy the 2015 Wonderful Waterfalls Tour.

Virtually all of the Trillium Group opted for this tour, with the exception of our fearless leader Paul Whittaker, and Rose Stipanitz both involved in other Watkins Glen activities, including in Rose's case a day of S.C.C.A. autocross competition. Paul and Carol made a brief appearance at the track to see how Rose was doing. So, bright and early, the rest of us made the short trek down to Watkins Glen and then turned right and went up the hill to assemble as a group at the State Park's parking lot.

After a briefing by Terrie Soutter the event organizer, we and the other dozens of cars set out on our journey, which included multiple stops at the myriad of waterfalls dotting the region, interspersed with lots of interesting secondary roads and twisties, plus the added "bonus" of driving through Ithaca.

Some of the highlights of the day included spectacular stops and photo-ops along the way of course, and as volunteer tour leader for the day, with Leah as my trusty and dependable navigator, we were able to hold things together in spite of getting strung out and separated more than once. We even picked up a young couple from Pennsylvania at the start and we adopted them into our group. They actually stayed with us all day, and into the evening and supper back at the hotel!

As the day wore on, the dreaded weather forecast came to fruition, and it basically rained on us for the last hour or two of the afternoon's run. But that didn't slow us down or dampen our enthusiasm, as we are were nestled snugly and top up in our roadsters.

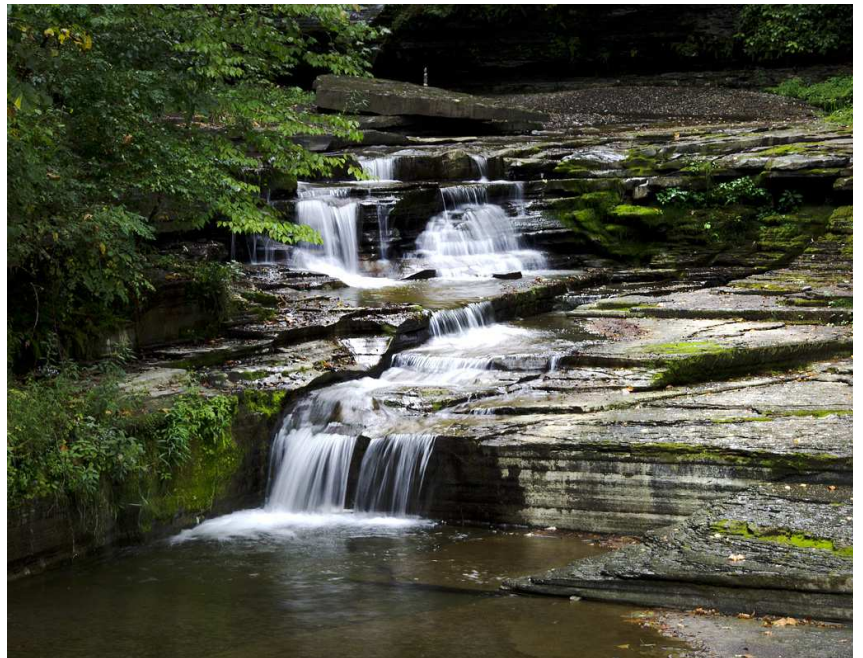
We arrived back at the Glen Motor Inn around 4 pm, and after a regulation glass or two of post-tour wine, we reassembled at a hastily organized dinner in the Lounge in front of the big-screen TV and watched the Jays thoroughly trounce the home-team New York Yankees. My hamburger and fries never tasted so good.

All in all, another almost perfect day in the Trillium Miata Club!





Wonderful Waterfall tour photos by Ed Preston



Trillium members enjoying the Wonderful Waterfall Tour. Photo by Dona Allard.

Watkins Glen
Vintage Festival Tour
September 10 -13, 2015
Paul Whittaker

