

Grafton Winery Tour

Well, it seemed like a good idea. Actually, it was a good idea and enjoyable time to get together. Unfortunately, the Piasa Bird Indian lore mural along the River Road in Alton had overdone his “rain dance” and treated us to a very nasty and dangerous storm. Our original reservation for 20 people, turned out to be only 8. It rained early in the morning to discourage many from attending and then treated us to a real “gully washer” in the afternoon.

We all met at the Pit Stop gas station in West Alton to caravan over to the Illinois side of the river. Passing over the beautiful Lewis and Clark Bridge, we drove through Alton, past the Piasa Bird then up the river to the Pere Marquette State Park and lunch in the lodge. This is a magnificent structure built in the 1930's by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The large cathedral ceiling is the centerpiece of the lodge with a large functioning fireplace (converted to gas) and a standing chess set with 3 foot tall figures.

Lunch was delicious! Fried chicken with all the fixings and finished off with rhubarb pie left us rolling out with full tummies and a smile on our faces. Our waitress was very efficient and served us our family style meal literally as we sat down.

Then it was down the River Road 5 miles to the Grafton Winery. They had a live band playing Johnny Cash songs and did a pretty impressive rendition of Johnny's signature style. The ladies went downstairs to view the wine making operation while the guys sat upstairs nursing a beer. Speaking of beer, your author is a beer fan and likes trying out new offerings. Seeing the menu of available brews, there was one called “Colweizen”. Weitzen (German for “wheat”) is a wheat beer such as Shocktop or Blue Moon and is a fruity or citrusy tasting beer. The “Col” added to the name was not obvious. The beer came in a traditional beer glass and was a kind of pale brown color. It had a very unusual taste not like anything experienced previously. The first couple of sips were exploratory as the beer was evaluated. As the consumption progressed and the beer level in the glass began to recede, it became a most unpleasant experience that could not be finished. The bartender was then consulted as to what it was, to which he replied that it was wheat beer mixed with Coca Cola. To each his own, but that is the last time I will ever try that again!!!

As we were enjoying our libations (at least everyone else was) the rains began to come down in earnest. We were sitting along the perimeter next to a glass garage door which opened up to an outdoor patio. The rain came and the wind blew and the chairs and tables on the patio began to walk across the floor. All in all, it was pretty scary especially since we were unwittingly sitting next to large glass windows.

Finally, the rain stopped and the wind died down. It was time to call it a day and head back home. Actually, that is when the real fun began. We got about 7 miles down the road and the

road was closed. Apparently, a small tornado had come through and blew the roof off a building, torn down some signs and knocked down a power line. The live power line was sitting on the road and police set up a barricade to prevent adventurous souls to drive over them and test their tolerance to 20,000 volts of electricity. They directed us back to Grafton to circle around back to Godfrey. Following their directions, we all ended up back on the River Road just south of the mayhem we had just avoided.

All's well that ends well! It was a shame that the weather deterred a larger turnout. It was a shame that we got caught up in that nasty storm. But, it was, as always, a good time to get together with our Buick family and enjoy the day.

Hopefully the weather will be more favorable next year and we can have a more relaxed time with a larger attendance. Look for the schedule in the Gazette next year put it on your calendar and plan to attend. You will be glad you did!



**Chug-a-lug, chug-a-lug
Make you want to holler hi-de-ho**