



# In The Breeze



September 2024

Official Newsletter of the Bluebonnet Miata Club

Still Free!

## *Bluebonnet Members Slayed that Dragon!*



From Sophie Parazo, our president on her first MATG experience: *“Every year during the first week of August Miata’s at the Gap, the longest running Miata meet up happens in Fontana Dam, NC, right on the Tennessee and North Carolina border. This year was the 28th year of the event and my first year to attend. It’s all about getting to drive on the legendary Tail of the Dragon. With 318 curves in 11 miles, Hwy 129 is America’s #1 sports car and motorcycle road. I believe there was around 1900 people who registered for the event and about 1300 Miata’s in attendance. It’s a free event, you just have to find your place to stay. Fontana Village is ground zero and is already fully booked for next year. There are several different runs set up for the event, but we had our own special Run Leader, Stan (and Betty) show us the ropes, and they did not disappoint. The pictures do not do it justice but it was a beautiful place and I can’t wait to go again.”*

*(More stories and photos on page 4, 5)*

## 2023 Club Officers

### President

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\* Appointed positions

## New Members

### Denis Murchison

New Braunfels

2012 True Red

### Stephen Kosman

Floresville

1991 Classic Red

2002 Crystal White

### Jennifer Martin

Converse

2011 Liquid Silver

### Tom & Donna Feerst

San Antonio

2024 Aero Gray

### Rodney Almarez

San Antonio

2023 Soul Red Metallic

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*zoom-zoom*



# President's Message

Well hello Bluebonnet Miata Club!

Every year during the first week of August Miata's at the Gap, the longest running Miata meet up happens in Fontana Dam, NC, right on the Tennessee and North Carolina border. This year was the 28th year of the event and my first year to attend. It's all about getting to drive on the legendary Tail of the Dragon. With 318 curves in 11 miles, Hwy 129 is America's #1 sports car and motorcycle road. I believe there was around 1900 people who registered for the event and about 1300 Miata's in attendance. It's a free event, you just have to find your place to stay. Fontana Village is ground zero and is already fully booked for next year. There are several different runs set up for the event, but we had our own special Run Leader, Stan (and Betty) show us the ropes, and they did not disappoint. The pictures do not do it justice but it was a beautiful place and I can't wait to go again.



I know there are a couple of big events coming up and I truly recommend joining one of the groups to get a taste of what it's like to go on a trip. With our great run leaders, you will definitely have a good time.

Till next time, drive safe and keep on zoomin...

Sophie

*Sophie Parazo, President*

# From the Editor

There is no doubt that my age has shoved me into a more conservative outlook on all Miata related subjects. Okay, many of you will call me a fuddy duddy, wimp, closed minded or some other way to throw shade on my opinions. That's fine, I'm allowed my opinions, right? May I remind you that I certainly don't think my view on most Miata subjects are shared by many, I mean, heckie darn, that would be boring if folks did!



With some good assistance, OpEd, nee Ed Polansky, penned a great article this month regarding the Miatas at the Gap gathering held each year near Robbinsville, North Carolina. There you won't only find hundreds of Miataphiles attending, you will see an array of Miatas like you've never seen before. By the way, the "Tail of the Dragon" is the main draw with 318 curves in only 11 miles! Let me stop here and give my advice, you should go if you haven't already! Some of our members have been and attended this year's event as well.

After seeing photos of many of the attendee's and their Miata's, it cemented my reason why I don't care to attend the actual MATG event. I would be roundly criticized for my opinion of the different abhorrent things people have done to their Miata's. (This is where you all can tell me I'm full of it, haha.) When I get together with other Miata owners, I enjoy seeing what I call tasteful modifications and sharing compliments for such things. But when I see the photos of many of the Miatas there, I am left with little desire to go there for the actual event. I say actual because I do want to go there on any other weekend simply because the thrill of driving the Tail is just that, a thrill like no other. Also, when it's not the event week, there are less folks driving and therefore it's much more appealing to have the run more to ones self.

Oh, I'll go one more time to the Dragon, but it'll be a more intimate affair. I like visiting with like-minded folks that appreciate our wonderful roadsters the way I love 'em! And I'll forget all those Miatas that have been so violated, haha!

Cheers everyone!

*George Lucas, Editor*

## What our MATG attendee's had to say about their visit to Miatas at the Gap 2024:

**STAN CHAMBERS** - "323 Miatas parked in the grass for the group photo on Saturday morning. If you zoom in you can see us on the porch of our cabin and our Miatas parked in the driveway.

Total registration: 1901 people.

Total Miatas registered: 1239.

I'm estimating another 20% didn't register, they just showed up. Its free to attend MATG. Registration helps with negotiating with vendors, county tourism \$, etc. Plus, bragging about being the largest Miata event in the US."

**MARK HUNGERMAN** - "Miata's At The Gap 2024 was amazing, once again. We had nine Bluebonnet members, the Parazos, the Vosses, the Chambers, Jimbo and Wanda, and myself, the biggest club turnout since I've been attending.

We did our usual pre-dawn Dragon run each day, picked up our swag bags on Friday or Saturday, browsed vendor row, and followed Stan on drives around the local area, stopping each day for a pineapple whip in Robbinsville.

The event has no registration fee. Everything is provided by the vendors. They have a raffle of vendor provided prizes, even with a breakdown by Miata generation, and all raffle proceeds go to the local Fire Department and EMS. For the first time, I attended the raffle drawing, and I can tell you that the best place to watch from is the long veranda outside of the restaurant.

If you haven't been, it's a fun few days, and you might want to try it."

**JIM AND DELIA VOSS** - "Ever since Delia and I joined the club in 2016 we had been hearing about this mystical thing called "The Dragon". While we were curious about what everyone was talking about we were never curious enough, until this year, to take the plunge. We decided to join the Stan Chambers Barnum and Bailey road show and head to North Carolina. After talking with several folks who had been to the MATG before we decided to make reservations at the Deals Gap Motorcycle Resort since the Fontana Lodge was already booked. More on the "resort" later.

We left San Antonio on Sunday and took 2 1/2 days to get to Deals Gap. It can certainly been done quicker but we just enjoyed the drive.

Our first taste of the Tail of the Dragon was as we were arriving in Deals Gap. To say it was challenging is an understatement. There really are 318 turns in the 11 mile run. I very quickly found out, and it was reinforced each morning at 6:30 am when Stan lead the group on a dragon run, that I am an old lady (and yes this is Jim speaking). I loved and hated the dragon both at the same time. The 11 mile run each way was by far the most technical driving I have ever done. Our Miata handled wonderfully and I found it could handle the curves and turns much better than I could.

When we arrived at the Deals Gap Motorcycle Resort we found it to be every bit as austere and eclectic as it had been described. The rooms were sparse but clean. The staff was very friendly. There was a pretty equal mix of Miata and motorcycle guests and EVERYONE was friendly.

We arrived on Tuesday and on every day Wednesday thru Saturday, Stan Chambers would lead a run down the dragon then later in the day we would go on runs all over Eastern Tennessee/Western North Carolina. Stan expertly picked routes that would avoid the mass gaggle, 60-80 car runs from MATG groups. We drove the Blue Ridge Parkway, The Great Smokey Mountain National Parkway, Foothills Parkway and the Moonshiner Highway 28 to name just a few. All were amazing and loads of fun.

The MATG rally itself was a real eye opener. Nearly 2,000 Miatas of every color, every modification, and every personality. The highlight for us was spending time with the other Bluebonnet club members. We sat around, talked, ate and just chilled. So, was the 3,000 mile round trip worth it you might ask. Well we have already made our reservations at Fontana village for next year! So if you want to experience some of the most challenging and scenic roads in North Carolina then join the crowd next August for Tail of the Dragon, Miata's at the Gap XXIX."





## <sup>5</sup> **More of what our MATG attendee's had to say about their visit to Miatas at the Gap 2024:**

**JIMBO TREAT-** "We had 6 couples and 7 cars from the Bluebonnets attending the 28<sup>th</sup> Miatas at the Gap this year, but those numbers pale in comparison to the amount of registered cars and people. 1,239 Miatas and 1,901 people signed in over a three day period!  
By Generation: NA 34.6% NB 24.9 % NC 18.0 % ND 21.8 % Kit Car 0.7 % About 330 Miatas squeezed onto the baseball field at Fontana Village.

While others took a pretty direct route to the area, Wanda and I got to go see friends and family in Biloxi, Tupelo, Nashville, and Knoxville on our way to Fontana Village. But the trip wasn't without issues. Due to a stalled car on I-10, an 18 wheeler pulled out in front of us while we were at the 75 MPH speed limit. We came within a few feet of hitting the trailer, but that act made Wanda's car slide forward on my trailer, crushing my tool box. We didn't discover this until our next pit stop, and so the car was rubbing on the tool box until then. I reset the car, and we made Biloxi later that day.

Monday, we head out towards North Mississippi, and about 20 minutes in, we got a flat on the trailer. However, due to previous events like this, I was more prepared, having a floor jack and the tools needed for such an occurrence. 20 minutes later, we are on the road again.

After a great family visit and meeting our newest grandniece Mabry, we made our way through Nashville and Knoxville to visit more extended family before arriving at Fontana Village Thursday morning.

Saturday, we headed out following Stan and Betty Chambers for another great day of roads and roadside eateries. While tooling along, we saw another group of Miatas headed the opposite direction. About 30 seconds later, we come across a tree that had to have fallen onto the road after the other group had just come through there. Luckily, it had fallen in a way that I could push one side of the tree up, leaving enough room for our group to drive through to the other side. Luckily, one of the stopped vehicles on the other side had a machete available, so I borrowed it from them and was able to hack several branches out of the way to help open the road back up. Just call me "Machete Jimbo"!!

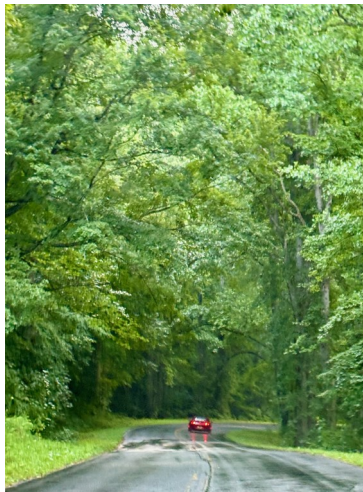
Later that day, I had the "FUN" of standing out that afternoon in the broiling heat with my raffle tickets, hoping to win something for one of our Miatas. Then Stan and Betty handed me their tickets and said good luck. Then another guy said he couldn't stay, and so he handed me his tickets! I actually won a set of seat lowering brackets for the ND from Stan's bunch of tickets, so it was worth it.

And our world is just getting smaller and smaller. Wanda and I left Vicksburg Monday morning after catching Caesar and Sophie at their hotel, and we stopped at the Buccee's in Temple, TX for a gas and pit stop. Who walks in the door almost right behind us but Caesar and Sophie!?!?! You couldn't have planned it any better!! "





# Miatas at the Gap Photos





## *What is the big draw of the Miatas at the Gap?*

*By OpEd Polansky*



You probably are aware that several BBMC members recently returned from the 2024 Miatas at the Gap. If you didn't know, MATG is the longest running and one of the largest Miata gatherings in the country.

Located near the Tail of the Dragon, MATG enthusiasts gather to drive some of the coolest country roads in the country. The 2024 event was the 28th anniversary of the event and had over a thousand Miatas present.



The high point of the MATG is driving the Tail of the Dragon which is an adventurous stretch of road in Tennessee that has, during its short eleven miles distance, 318 exciting turns. With all the turns, the road resembles a twisty dragon's tail, and hence the name. Even with low speeds, the blind curves, narrow roads, and weather conditions add up to create a challenge and sometimes frightening experience.

I drove the Dragon's Tail during Mark Hungerman's Dark Dragon mega run in 2017 where he combined the Dragon's Tail with an Eclipse watch. It was up there with one of the best run events ever! I asked him to give me some of his thoughts about driving the Dragon's Tail. Mark started by quoting something Stan Chambers recently said: "The Tail is a technical drive, not a scenic drive, and that you need to keep your eyes on the road." If you don't, you risk easily missing a braking or shifting point, and winding up off the road like the Corvette we saw this year. Less than a mile from start of the Tail, the Corvette left the road in a very meaningful way, slamming into a tree on the passenger's side hood and fender.

In addition to the "keep your eyes on the road" advice, Mark then highlighted three other safety tips for running the Tail: (1) drive within your abilities, don't try to match up with the more skilled drivers, you will not be successful; (2) don't brake while in a curve unless you have no other choice, because turning and braking at the same time while in a curve gives you an excellent chance of swapping ends, so, he recommends losing speed through downshifting or braking before entering the curve; and (3) keep your windshield clean, because he remembered a red NA driving the Tail came around a curve, got sun blinded by a dirty windshield and missed the next curve and uncontrollably exited the road.

Sounds like good advice, not just for the Tail, but for driving any twisty roads (for example, the Twisted Sisters). I can't over emphasize the need for all you BBMC drivers to avoid pushing past your limits when you are out on the road.

Incidentally, Mark is planning to attend the MATG in 2025. I am leaning to going myself. If you are interested, make plans now! Or if you have any questions, check with Mark and/or with our MATG expert, Stan Chambers.



# Mazda MX-5 Miata: The Pros And Cons of its Tinyness

DAN NEIL, *from the Wall Street Journal*

**AFTER A LIFETIME** of swiveling and gyrating, my pelvis has left the building. I'm supposed to be getting a titanium hip soon—I was thinking of painting it candy apple red. In the meantime, I'm hobbling around in a pitiful state. So, naturally, the new-car gods sent me one of the smallest, lowest, least physically accessible cars on the market: the 2024 Mazda MX-5 Miata RF Grand Touring—this one with a coveted six-speed manual transmission, clutch pedal and limited-slip rear differential. I looked out of my window and cursed the sky: You bastards! You know how much this is going to hurt? Yet I couldn't keep away. Groaning like a bear, I fell into the driver's seat and sped off to my appointment with an NFL-caliber shot of cortisone.

Twas ever thus: The essence of the Miata is its lightness, which means smallness, which means the seats don't go back very far, the trunk is tiny and there is no place to put a purse or bookbag. Ask any owner: The Miata's rewards must always be indexed against a certain claustrophobia, even pain. My ass sure isn't fitting in these seats any better over the years. The good news is that I'm a little shorter than I used to be so my head doesn't brush the ceiling anymore.

People call the Miata "iconic" but I wish they wouldn't. The word they want is "canonical" or even "paradigmatic." Debuting in 1989 and based on the design-engineering of the first Lotus Elan (1962-75), the Miata was lo-fi and old-school when it was new—a pastiche of the classic British roadster without the leaky canvas top or faulty ignition. Lucas: The Prince of Darkness. Hundreds of thousands of front-engine, rear-drive sports cars poured into the U.S. in the 1960s and 1970s, from marques such as MG, Triumph, Austin-Healey, Sunbeam, Jaguar and many others. And that's not even counting imports from Italy. Today's buyers have only one stick left to stir those coals.

Of course, by modern standards, the Miata RF is not quick or fast in a straight line—heroically slow, in fact, almost tantric. Getting to 60 mph from a dead stop requires about six seconds and depends on the driver executing two well-stroked, almost-sadistic upshifts. These I will now render phonetically: *BaaaWAHHH!—gnurrrr—BaWAAHHH!—gnurrrr—BaWAAHHH...* Are we there yet? Note that the 2.0-liter four-cylinder engine is naturally aspirated, not turbocharged—which is why it makes so many stirring, snarling, rorty, buzzy, blatty, biplane-y engine sounds, especially running up against its 7,500 rpm redline. But it doesn't make a lot of power—181 hp at 7,000 rpm and 151 lb-ft at 4,000 rpm. Such engines also tend to produce higher net emissions, especially when paired with a stir-your-own six-speed transmission. That combo is particularly messy, emissions-wise.

Mazda can't stuff a more powerful, less charismatic turbocharged engine into the Miata without compromising its buzzy quintessence. Nor can the company make a bigger Miata the way the BMW-owned Mini brand started building overinflated Mini Coopers. As a result the car you see here has reached a kind of final-form evolution, a better-than-British sports car for the ages. And it *is* better. Our Grand Touring RF (retractable fastback) weighs just 2,470 pounds—a remarkable figure, considering the upfit, including 7G comms and phone-compatible connectivity, onboard navigation, heated leather seats and more. That mass is optimally distributed along a 91-inch wheelbase, with a static weight balance of 51/49%, front/rear, under a car about the length of a two-person snowmobile. Perfect, eh? But small. With retractable hardtop in place, the Miata stands a mere 49.0 inches high. By the time I got to the sawbones, I couldn't lift myself out of the car and had to roll out onto the parking lot.

Totally worth it. For the 2024 model-year, the Mazda MX-5 Miata Sport with manual transmission starts at just \$28,985 MSRP. Our all-in test car didn't crack \$40,000. As for operating costs, the RF's EPA-estimated mileage of 26/34 mpg, city/highway (91 octane recommended), may represent the highest fun-to-fuel ratio you can buy.

At this point I would kindly ask readers to form two groups, based on one's disposition toward adorable faux-British sports cars. Please board with your group. For the first group, the appeal lies in the car's tart, shameless style and cruisy presentation. Our example was particularly bratty, dipped in the optional Snowflake White Pearl paint, a luminescence I associate with Fra Angelico paintings. The first group has no interest in a manual transmission. A six-speed automatic is always an option.

There's no shame in the Miata's commuting game. Model-year updates include a better padded dash console; a revised gauge cluster display with generationally improved graphics; a larger 8.8-inch infotainment display with touch functionality when using Apple CarPlay or Android Auto; and Alexa integration.

Personally, I prefer the flying-buttress roof of the RF model over the conventional folding cloth top. In the RF, only the panel over the cabin folds away, so the driver is less exposed to the elements, and judgment. Obviously, an ermine-white Miata makes for a strong personal presentation. I was having trouble owning it.

But what makes the Miata so want-able is its size. That's a bit of a problem. As the decades roll on, the disparity between the Miata and everything else on the road—a factor known in safety circles as crash compatibility—is getting pretty worrisome. I spent most of my week looking up at trucks' and SUVs' prop shafts and lower control arms. If I thought my hip hurt before... The second group will self-identify as motorheads. These drivers know and love the shout-in-the-wind thrill of a lightweight sports car. For them an automatic-equipped Miata is sacrilege. For them the Miata experience is all about being a human in the loop of a vital anachronism—the sawing revs, the tumbling rev-downs and overruns, the stitched-leather shifter quivering under the loads. These are the new sensualists.

So, if you ask me if you should buy one of the greatest sports cars in history for what seems like very reasonable money, I'd say yes, as long as you're comfortable. And maybe even if you're not.



# Ladies, Ladies, Ladies



Bluebonnet Ladies after their Caverns visit. L to R, Pamela Stivers, Sophie Parazo, Sandy Phelps, Cheryl Knight, Beverly Turner, Lisa Martin, Sylvia and in front, Monica Harrison, Marilyn Hamilton and Delia Voss! Looking good, ladies!

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## ***More Ladies Events coming up!***

**SEP 6 - POOL PARTY**, Coordinator Monica Harrison NOTE ADJUSTED DATE

**Thursday, September 19th, Ladies Bunco, hosted by Marilyn Hamilton.** Meet at Big's Burger Joint, 2303 N Loop 1604, west bound access road. Meet there at 6:30 for a fun evening!

**OCT 11 - LADIES ONLY TRACK DAY**, Coordinator Monica Harrison

**NOV 8 - KRIS KRINGLE CHRISTMAS FAIR**, Coordinator Barb Thompson

**DEC 13 - MUSEUM - New Braunfels**, Coordinators: Wanda Begnoche and Barbara Thompson

# Upcoming Runs and Events

## September 2024

**Wednesday, September 4th Run to the Ozarks and Northwest Arkansas 25 Anniversary Event.** This run will be co-hosted by Rohm Thompson and led by George Lucas and Marilyn McCullen. We will be starting at the QT on the southside of New Braunfels. Contact George at 210-846-1944 for more details.

**Friday, September 6th, Pool Party, Coordinated by Monica Harrison, check our website for details~**

**Friday, September 13th, Men's breakfast, hosted by George Lucas, 9:00 a.m.** . Let's try a new place recommended by a good friend! Taqueria Datapoint. This location (they have two), will be 4503 DeZavala Rd, SATX 78249. With 4 Star reviews, I'm excited to find a new place! See you guys there!

**Tuesday, September 17th, Lunar Zoomer Dinner, hosted by George Lucas.** Back by demand, Chris Madrid's , meet at 6:30 p.m. for tasty burgers and fries! Wear Chris Madrid's cap or shirt for a free Shake! Stay for a photo shoot of the full Harvest moon!

**Thursday, September 19th, Ladies Bunco, hosted by Marilyn Hamilton.** Meet at Bigz Burger Joint, 2303 N Loop 1604, west bound access road. Meet there at 6:30 for a fun evening!

**Saturday, September 21st, Fall Tech Day, hosted by Monica and Nugget.** Come out for fun as there will be a FunCana! Test your driving skills with several driving exercises! Fun for all!!! 8:00 a.m.— ??? Check the website for further details!

**Tuesday, September 24th, BBMC Meeting, Sophie Parazo, president presiding.** Bigz Burger Joint, 2303 N. Loop 1604 W, SATX 78258. Greet and Eat, 6:30 p.m., Meeting starts promptly at 7:30 p.m.

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## Run to the Ozarks

### Led by George Lucas

(Yes, this is in lieu of the earlier planned Head for the Mountains)

THE NORTHWEST ARKANSAS MIATA CLUB CELEBRATES 25 YEARS!

THE NORTHWEST ARKANSAS MIATA CLUB WILL CELEBRATE THEIR 25th ANNIVERSARY THIS SEPTEMBER 5th- 8th, 2024  
IN EUREKA SPRINGS, AR.

WE WOULD LOVE TO HAVE ALL OUR MIATA FRIENDS TO JOIN IN WITH US

IN THIS CELEBRATION OF MIATA FUN, SO SAVE THE DATES AND COME TO

BEAUTIFUL EUREKA SPRINGS AND HELP the NWA Club CELEBRATE!

479-253-9768

**LOOK LOOK LOOK!** On the morning of September 4th, we will be meeting at the QT, 4311 IH35, New Braunfels at **8:00 a.m.** and depart at 8:30 a.m. We will run up to Idabel, OK for our first evening. We have group reservations at the Comfort Suites in Idabel. Their direct number to the front desk is 580-245-6546, press 2! The following day, we'll drive on in to Eureka Springs for the event. Our hotel for the event is Best Western Inn of the Ozarks. Their number is 479-253-9768. A great time is in store at this big event, join in! Questions? Call George Lucas at 210-846-1944



**Friday, September 13th**  
**Men's Breakfast,**  
**9:00 a.m.**

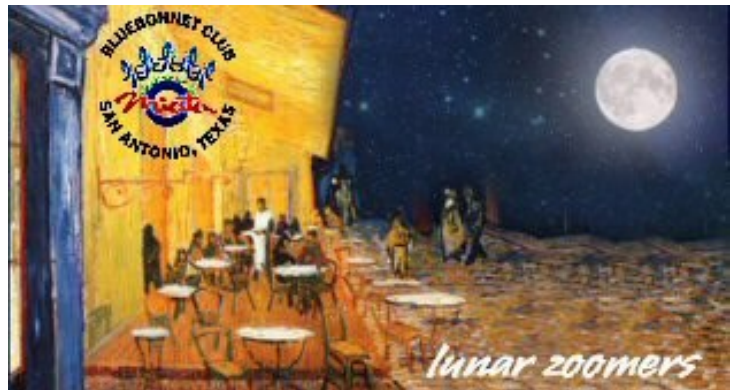
hosted by George Lucas.  
 4 Star restaurant—Stay and visit!



**Tuesday, September**  
**17th**

**6:30 p.m.**

Let's meet at



**Chris Madrida**

**HOLLYWOOD & BLANCO**  
**SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**



## BBMC welcomes Coast to Coast to Coast travelers to Texas

Bill Emerson and his friend Nancy, from Florida, in "Tweety" stopped in for a welcome to San Antonio and the Bluebonnet Miata Club held at Big'z Burger Joint. Making a coast to coast to coast trip, we were honored to have them and showed them by attending Big'z last week. Bill said, "We went to TEXAS the long way... Florida. Maine.. Washington (State).. California.. TEXAS the home to Florida 10,104 miles, 32states and lots of Miata Clubs visited along the way."



*Don't forget our Sponsors!*



## Remember When?



Harry and Barbara Maxwell, Joe and Cheryl Knight, Delia and Jim Voss, Mark Hungerman, Marilyn McCullen and George Lucas, Paul Wilson and in the rear Jackie Lambert and Jimbo Treat, from the Head for the Ozarks, 2016