

## 2009 VTCI North Central Regional Convention

The convention was scheduled to start on Thursday June 25<sup>th</sup> but when a few of us from the hosting club arrived early Wednesday afternoon, what did we find but 4 cars from the Kansas City area and a pickup with a trailer from Winnipeg already in the parking lot. Were they that anxious to get the convention going? Not really. Everybody was shopping at the Mall of America but they were indeed ready for the convention activities to begin.

Much of Thursday was left unscheduled so that cars could be cleaned and some shopping could be done since primarily we were virtually across the parking lot from the MOA and the IKEA store. The Thursday evening scheduled event was the St. Paul Saints baseball game. Thunderbird Midwest members provided transportation with their personal vehicles so Cindy Mattson and Pat Lieske got busy lining up the riders with drivers to attend game. Since we had a pretty good size group in attendance at the game, the Saints recruited Dan and Barb Nordberg in their 1960 hardtop to drive out onto the perimeter track and "Steal Second Base", which was then signed by the entire team and auctioned at the Saturday night banquet. The T-Bird looked absolutely gorgeous in that setting. It was a perfect evening for a baseball game and it appeared that everybody enjoyed the outing. A late evening at the "Backyard Bar" in the hotel was enjoyed by a few while others gathered in the Hospitality Room which was well stocked.



Friday, June 26<sup>th</sup> started with the judges' meeting at 8 AM and onto the show field for judging at 9. A total of 14 Thunderbirds were judged, another 39 on display plus 4 in the Senior Participation bracket. The judging ended shortly after noon so now we are ready for some fun. About 2 PM, Cindy and Pat did their thing again, lining up riders with drivers for a cruise to Como Park in St. Paul. Jay White, VP of the local club, planned the cruise from the hotel to the park and it certainly was a nice ride. Many of the passengers commented about what a pretty city St. Paul is. Como Park has a free zoo, a child size amusement park, a large conservatory and a carousel, built in 1914, that originally was located at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds, restored and moved to Como in 1988. Our guests enjoyed a couple of hours to check out the zoo and the conservatory as well as the carousel. The club reserved picnic shelter, a catered picnic, which was excellent, and really hit the spot. Then Judy, a young lady from the University of Minnesota, did a presentation with 4 birds of prey, a bald eagle, an owl, a hawk, and a falcon. It was a very interesting and very informative. This was a very popular event with 94 convention goers enjoying an interesting and fun afternoon. Then it was back to the hotel where there were cars to check out, a few snacks from the Hospitality Room, and just some old fashion reminiscing with old friends.



Since judging had already been conducted, Saturday, June 27<sup>th</sup> had 2 events planned, a car cruise and a boat ride. The car cruise left the hotel at 8:30 AM, along the Mississippi River to Wabasha, Minnesota and a place called Lark Toys. It is arguably the 2<sup>nd</sup> most scenic cruise in the state. The 1<sup>st</sup> being the north shore of Lake Superior. There had been some rain Friday night with drizzle into Saturday morning, but the skies cleared by noon and the weather cooled off nicely. A total of 11 cars made this cruise where they had lots of fun including crashing a wedding party in one of the parks. Cindy and Pat did their thing again connecting riders to drivers for a 9 AM ride to Stillwater, Minnesota and a paddlewheel boat cruise on the scenic St. Croix River. The weather cleared just in time for the boat cruise so everybody seemed to have a good time as well as having a great lunch served to them. The scenery was fantastic and there was plenty of time for talking with some old friends, and some new ones too. But it had to end so everybody climbed back into the vans for the ride back to the hotel and soon it was time to get ready for the awards ceremony and the banquet.



The banquet had a different twist. Instead of awarding door prizes by calling ticket numbers, Barb Nordberg planned an auction. Beginning Thursday, 6 couples were awarding "Bird Bucks" to whoever they felt earned them. The door prizes were then auctioned off for these "Bird Bucks". The auctioneer was a friend of the Nordberg's who

owns a body shop and plenty of good-natured Thunderbirds. Bidding activity. Everybody were medals similar to Olympic Games, The banquet MC,



names of the award winners who immediately placed the medals around their neck for the customary picture taking session. The only difference was that we did not have the 3 tier platform that the Olympic winners stand on. The reason? Let's just say that there's quite a difference in the ages of the Olympians and our Thunderbird owners and we did not want any injuries.

a vintage Mustang plus is a state senator. So there were jokes especially with the "gang" from the Chicagoland on a prize with "play money" takes on a different level of seemed to have a good time but it too had to end. The awards the medals awarded at the Gold, Silver and Bronze.

Barry Blazeovic, read the



And then before you knew it, it was Sunday, June 28<sup>th</sup> and the end of the convention. All that planning and worrying about all of the details and just like that, it was over. The Hospitality Room was open early for hugs and good-byes. There were still plenty of treats available for those who wanted to take along something for the road.

This convention would not have been possible without the hard work of the Planning Committee and all of the local club members and volunteers that helped out in so many ways. There was also the support of our sponsors as well as the contributions we received from the VTCI and the NC clubs (Land of Lincoln, Kansas City, Chicago, Hoosier State club, the Manitoba club, and the Mid Kansas club from Wichita) that were really appreciated. As a representative of the local club, I want to thank our guests for making this convention a fun and successful event. I won't be able to name everyone but thanks to Clayton & Joyce Busch, Lou and Marilyn Paliani, Jim and Maureen Mills, and Bill Shestopalka and Shirley Murray for making the long journey to the Twin City area. There are also our good friends from the Kansas City club, the Chicagoland club, and the Land of Lincoln club. And I didn't forget our guests that drove down from the Michigan area. Last but not least, thanks to our fellow TBirders from Iowa as well as Terri and Bob McNeill that flew in from the state of Washington. We were honored to have you attend our convention and have some fun even for a short period of time. Now let's move on with the same level of participation at Coshocton and then in Chicago in 2010 for the International Convention.