

## THE CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE at The Greenbrier

"What a beautiful day," I said to my wife, JoC, as we headed out our driveway in our 1931 Model A Ford Victoria Leatherback. For those not familiar with the Vicky, I'll digress for a moment. Ford produced 4.8 million Model A's between 1927 and 1931. However, the Victoria was built only for a few months near the end of Model A production. It was Ford's luxury model, with an unusual shape, the back end is pushed out to form a bustle. The back seat is hinged so it can be pulled forward, exposing a storage compartment. The first Victorias were produced with a soft, vinyl top referred to as a Leatherback. To save money, Ford quickly converted to an all-steel top. There are fewer than 700 Victorias on the road today, and fewer still are Leatherbacks.

It wasn't long before we were cruising down the interstate at 60 mph—the Vicky purring like a kitten. Our destination was the famed Greenbrier Resort in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, host of the Concours d'Elegance. It's worth noting that The Greenbrier, a high-end resort, was built with a subterranean bunker intended for use by the president and cabinet in the event of a national emergency.

We were about 70 miles from home when disaster struck. The engine started banging like someone was beating on it with a sledgehammer. I pulled onto the shoulder and knew immediately that I wasn't driving the Vicky to The Greenbrier. I called my grandson, Mitchell, and asked him to bring my truck and trailer—and to have a friend drive JoC's Jaguar. When Mitchell arrived, we loaded Vicky onto the trailer, transferred our belongings to the Jag, and continued on to The Greenbrier. Once Mitchell got back home, he dropped the oil pan and confirmed the bad news: I had broken the crankshaft.



### Friday: The Mountain Tour

I had never been to a concours, so I didn't know what to expect—other than that it would attract high-roller car enthusiasts. I will say this: everyone we met was down-to-earth and congenial, regardless of how many Ferraris or Bentleys they owned. The Concours d'Elegance was a three-day event. Friday, the first day, featured a lengthy mountain tour. Nearly all the vehicles—about fifty—were high-end, six-figure sports cars. My Vicky could have held her own, but it would have pushed her to the limit.

The first stop on the tour was breakfast at The Greenbrier's Summit Lodge, a beautiful, giant log structure. At our table I asked one gentleman what he drove. He said he had an Aston Martin, as did his wife. He also mentioned that he regularly travels to England for the Goodwood races, and that he attends the concours at Pebble Beach and other venues. The tour ended at Pipestem State Park, where we took a tram down the



mountain for lunch. That evening concluded with a social reception, drinks and heavy hors d'oeuvres.



### **Saturday: Cars, Cocktails, and the Charity Ball**

Saturday featured "Cars and Cocktails," a chance for owners outside the main concours field to display some very nice vehicles. This is where we were scheduled to show our Vicky—had we made it.

Saturday night we attended the Charity Ball. The theme was the Kentucky Derby, and they showed the race live on big screens. Everyone dressed as they might have years ago for Derby Day, and JoC and I were all decked out. The folks at our dinner table were especially interesting. The woman to my right was a muscle-car enthusiast; she and her husband had a 40-by-70-foot building where they double-stacked their collection. Next to them was a couple who had planned to drive their Ferrari from Washington, D.C., but one of their \$1,000



tires disintegrated along the way. Not to be deterred, they rented a Hyundai from Enterprise and carried on. When I asked the next gentleman what he drove, he said he had a Ferrari—and his wife had two. Go figure.

### **Sunday: The Concours Field**

Sunday was the Concours itself, the day the seven-figure automobiles came out on display, one more impressive than the next. But it wasn't only high-end machinery on the field; the lineup also included everything down to what you might consider a well-kept daily driver. If you haven't been to a Concours d'Elegance, you owe it to yourself to attend one. This was our first, but it won't be our last.



*Bill Gaertner*