

TRANSCONTINENTAL MOTOR CONVOY



Jack & Beverly Burkes

Vehicle:

1967 Kaiser M35A1 Shop Van with multifuel diesel engine.

Why we decided to make the journey:

We had been hearing bits and pieces about the convoy and thought it would be great fun to hook up with the convoy in Cheyenne and terminate our trip in Fallon, NV. While attending the '08 MVPA Convention in Portland, Beverly and I attended a meeting about TMC '09. Everyone at the meeting was a total stranger, with the exception of Art Pope. The speaker for the meeting was Terry Shelswell. Terry had such a presentation that we decided at that time to make the entire trip. We felt it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and if we didn't take it, this chance would be lost forever.

Most enjoyable part of the trip:

All of it!

The Northeast was at its best in June '09. The country was so green and the people who lined the streets and highways, waving the American Flag, brought tears to our eyes time after time. The veterans all across the country who came up and shared their stories with us were heart warming. Our appreciation goes to the people who were so friendly, hospitable, and giving and who hosted the Convoy all across the nation. The Midwest was a great trip in itself. The country was beautiful- the huge green fields of corn, wheat, and soy beans throughout Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa and all through Nebraska! What a glorious nation we have! Since Beverly and I have lived in West Texas all of our lives, traveling through the prairies and mountains of the West were what we were most accustomed to- the great wide open spaces, which we love. It was our privilege to be able to make this trip in its entirety and to live in a country where we could do so without "receiving permission" and checking in with authorities along the way. On the other hand, touring Fallon NAS and Dugway Proving Ground(both of which required prior permission) were exceptional privileges and we consider it a honor to have toured those bases.

Meals:

Oh yes, we couldn't forget the food. It was a smorgasbord that was 3000 miles long. Best Meals: Ties between Norlo Park, PA; East Palestine, OH; and Delphos, OH; and "Honorable Mention" would go to many others.

Problem:

One problem we encountered with our Deuce was getting the radiator repaired. The only shop that would repair the old radiator in Grand Island, NE did not do any mechanic work. Therefore, Jack had to take the radiator out and replace it afterwards. While preparing to pull the radiator out, the ladder that Jack was standing on slid on the concrete floor, and Jack took a hard fall, landing flat on his back in a pile of radiator scraps. The pad on the middle finger of his left hand was cut practically off the middle joint. Jack washed his hands and we applied Neosporin and bandaids. Removing the radiator was extremely more difficult then. Jack should have called for assistance, but didn't. The old proprietor did help Jack reinstall the radiator and we were very grateful. Dr. Laws checked Jack's finger on the following day. Dr. Laws cleaned, medicated, and bandaged the finger properly, and gave Jack antibiotics to take. We greatly appreciated the doctor on the convoy.

The Most Challenging:

This crisis involved the throw-out bearing on the Deuce freezing up and thus destroying the clutch. We fell out of the convoy and drove into Sacramento, CA. We were in a time restraint because the next day was the final day of the convoy, reaching the Presidio in San Francisco. The problem was finding parts for the Deuce. Jack had



Beverly Burkes

talked via cell phone with Chris Brown, march leader for the Deuces, trying to come up with a plan. As it happened, Chris had a civilian riding "shotgun" in his Deuce and the passenger overheard the conversation and understood our dilemma. He told Chris that he knew of a clutch and brake supply company. in Sacramento that might have the parts. Chris contacted the company, explained our situation, and was told that if the company did not have parts, that they would make them.

Jack nursed the Deuce to the location of the Capitol Brake and Clutch Company, and was given permission to remove the transmission and clutch in their parking lot. Chris Brown, and the Field Group were up in the mountains, but were headed to Sacramento. It was about 12:30 pm when Jack began removing floorboards, over the transmission, jack shaft, transmission bolts, and everything that he could remove by himself.

About 1:40 pm, the Calvary arrived like a Texas tornado! The jeeps, the Deuces, and the 5-Tons came roaring up! Chris Brown and Benton Brown, Ken Field, Bernie Field, David Corkum and the womenfolk arrived and the work began. "I'll get the jack stands and square tubing!" Another took off for tool kits and tarps.

In the blink of an eye, the two jack stands were placed in the interior of each side of the cab, the 3" square tubing was placed atop of the jack stands. A comealong was connected to the square tubing and to the transmission, thus securing the transmission. The transmission was swung out of the way, and out came the throw-out bearing, clutch & pressure plate- All were quickly transported in to the parts counter of Capitol Brake and Clutch Co. The throw-out bearing was pressed on its traveling sleeve while a search was made for the clutch and pressure plate. It appeared that the store manager had knowledge of a "private stash" of parts. Within minutes, the parts were located. During this time, the Flywheel was removed and taken to the machinist to be resurfaced. Approximately 20 minutes later the Flywheel was returned to us and the installation phase began. At 6:15pm the installation was complete and the mini-convoY was pulling out of the parking lot and heading south to Stockton, CA, our rally point for the night.

We wanted to buy the group dinner in appreciation. The convoY wanted to drive on (to get out of Sacramento traffic, etc.) before stopping. In consideration of parking restraints, we decided to check out the restaurant at the Flying J near Stockton, CA. The hostess asked us to wait a moment while she called the manager. The manager told us he'd have a table prepared for our group quickly. Our group had royal treatment and the food was exceptionally good. The group sat, ate, and had a great visit. For us, this day was one of the highlights of the entire trip. It was pure pleasure to work with a group who had such tremendous respect and consideration for each other, a group of guys who knew what the job was, and how to get it done. I think the "Big Three" could learn from these men. Without the truck being repaired, we would not have been able to drive the final day of the ConvoY into San Francisco.

Beverly and Jack Burkes





“Driving on the convoy at 25 mph in a rainstorm, the wiper blade on Jack’s (driver) side came off and landed on the fender. Jack opened the door, stepped out on the running board, reached around the door and mirror mount, and retrieved the blade successfully while I held the steering wheel.”...Bev



“Sad day on July 1st, WLA motorcyclist was hit by a vehicle in Wyoming. Ian Wallace was airlifted to the hospital and had immediate surgery to stabilize his ankle. He is on the mend now.”...Bev



Beverly Burkes



Jack Burkes



Terry Shelswell, Director of the convoy (left)



(above and left)

These photos show the placement of the jack stands and the work that was done to remove the clutch, pressure plate and throw-out bearing on the Burkes' truck. Thanks to all the hard and fast work of the convoy mechanics and friends, the truck was back on the road and able to complete the trek.



Alain Mayeax of France





37 vehicles made the entire trip from Washington DC to San Francisco, California.



"Jack found a horned toad. Haven't seen one of those in Texas in a long time"



The Ames Monument stands on the highest elevation (8,247 feet) of the original transcontinental convoy route





(left)

The oldest and most unusual vehicle on the convoy was the 1917 “FWD” manufactured by the Four Wheel Drive Company in Clintonville, Wisconsin, which built 6,000 of the utility haulers for the U.S., France, England and Russia during WWI. This vehicle is clad in heavy armor of an ammunition truck and is owned by Don Chew. It was an essential vehicle for trench warfare, delivering ammunition, food, mail and supplies to the trenches.

The vehicle had to be trailered each day during the convoy as it can only travel at 12 mph on the ground, but it made the entire trip and certainly drew a lot of attention.

(right)

*“We’re Off to Frisco!” - The 1919 Transcontinental Motor Convoy
(Photo Dwight D. Eisenhower Library)*

In 1919, the Transcontinental Motor Convoy, a military expedition, used the Lincoln Highway to cross the country from Washington, D.C. to San Francisco, California. They averaged fifty-eight miles per day to test the U.S. Military’s ability to move material and personnel across the country overland using motorized vehicles, in the event of war with an “Asiatic Enemy”. Another convoy took place the following year to San Diego. Along the way they improved roads, built bridges, etc., and treated it as a military exercise—as if they were passing through potential enemy territory. They experienced the trials inherent with the movement of equipment through unimproved areas, including mud, quicksand and breakdowns. Several vehicles were lost, and the convoy arrived at their destination late, but still set a world record by breaching the 3,000 mile distance in just 60 days.

