

Savannah Trip - April 15th to April 18th, 2013

Was there really a *Moon River* that Johnny Mercer wrote about in Savannah, Georgia? Well, I didn't find it but what I did find was a wonderful collection of new and old friends and their cherished MGs. My husband, Ken and I traveled from Long Island, NY via: Washington, DC, the Outer Banks and along the coastal towns of North and South Carolina. It had been a fantastic trip thus far but the best was yet to come, the "NAMGAR Tours Savannah 2013" regional event.

Fourteen MGAs and one Magnette drifted into Savannah, Ga. as the Spanish moss caught the breezes. Savannah is a wonderful city for walking and with our hotel being in the Historic District, we all were able to easily stroll to see the sights. On our first night we walked to the ***Moon River Brewing Company*** passing a life sized sculpture of Johnny Mercer, probably Savannah's most famous resident. Mercer wrote so many of the songs that we all love such as *Stardust*, *Autumn Leaves*, *That Old Black Magic* and *Days of Wine Roses*. But probably the most famous was *Moon River* for the film *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.



Bronze statue of Johnny Mercer, the composer.

After dinner, the search for the elusive ‘Old Speckled Hen’ began as we all walked along the Savannah River waterfront area, alive with pubs and restaurants. Old Speckled Hen is an English ale from the Morland Brewery, first brewed Abingdon, Oxfordshire, England in 1979 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the MG car factory there. Its namesake was an MG call the "Owld Speckled Un" that the workers used to scoot around the factory in, occasionally getting splashed with paint. The bottle’s label bears the distinctive MG octagon. We found it ...and a lot more at **Kevin Barry’s Irish Pub**. So, by the time we all sang the fifth stanza of *The Wild Colonial Boy*, everyone WAS Irish.

We awoke on the second day to see a Trolley waiting at our hotel, ready to take us on a private tour of Savannah’s Historic Victorian District with its beautiful homes and unique grid street plan containing twenty-two park squares. The film makers of *Forrest Gump* created the opening scene where a feather swirls around the steeple of the **Independent Presbyterian Church** and rests on a bench in one of those little parks. This beautiful city has been host to many films over the years.



Independent Presbyterian Church, Savannah, Ga.

The evening brought us to the historic *Savannah Theatre* for the *Savannah Live* show featuring performers doing musical numbers from Pop to Broadway and Motown to Rock & Roll! The theatre itself is a treasure in Savannah. It was built in 1818 but the fire of 1948 and its subsequent renovation turned it into the Art Deco beauty that we see today. Performers such as Tyrone Powers, Sarah Bernhardt and even W.C. Fields created their magic on the Savannah Theater's stage. We all left humming a different song from that wonderful performance. After the show, someone in the group even 'channeled' Elvis...and some may believe that he really *lives in Savanna* ...at the *Savannah Smiles Dueling Pianos* pub! But then...you would have to ask Mike Finch about that fact (oh my!).



Mike Finch as Elvis!

Our third day started with our cars all cued up at the hotel for the drive to Wilmington Island and a visit to the *Savannah Bee Company* where we were delighted and amazed by the 'dances' of the bees contained in a display box in the store. We learned that a special honey, Royal Jelly, is fed to only one bee in the hive and that transforms her into the 'Queen'. I truly believe, as promised, that their Royal Jelly Body Butter will transform my skin into a thing of exceptional beauty! I will see everyone at the Ashville-GT and you can be the judge, ha!



Savannah Bee Company, Wilmington Island, Ga.

We then travelled to the Tybee Island lighthouse and restoration. From the top of the lighthouse, our MGA's looked like match box cars ready to be played with in a sand box. Then to lunch at the *North Beach Grill*, your classic beach dive...fantastic! Our side trip to the *Sugar Shack* for ice cream cones was a big hit with everyone.



View from the top of the Tybee Island Lighthouse.

Our fourth and final full day saw us all caravanning out to Pooler, Ga. on the outskirts of Savannah for a guided tour through the *Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum*. Ah... the Mighty Eighth! The museum was created to honor the men and woman that served our country valiantly, especially during World War II. We were reminded of that fact, many times during the tour of the museum...that the battles were important but the *people* were the story. They told us of a young man sent to the war, coming right off the cornfields of the Great Plains and an older woman who hid people in her home keeping soldiers and persecuted Jews alive.

We were all impressed by the clear and concise explanation given by our tour guide of our ‘march to war’ using maps, videos and charts. One map showed the area of England that was used to stage the Mighty Eighth for its invasion of Normandy. Cathy Finch showed where she lived (much later, of course!) which was very close to the air field that was used. We all shared a quiet moment while sitting in a small chapel built in their garden to resemble the churches built in Europe at the time. The heavenly sound of church bells playing *Anchors Away* drifted softly on the air.



Cathy Finch pointing to her home in England.

On our way back to the hotel, a few of us ventured to the famous *Bonaventure Cemetery* which was awakened from its sleepy existence when the now famous photo of “Bird Girl”, one of the statues in the cemetery, appeared on the cover of John Berendt’s book, *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*. I overheard a new NAMGAR member, Theresa Gaffney say that she was delighted to have seen the cemetery but she would “...*definitely not want to be there at night!*”. Later, we enjoyed our final dinner together at *The Lady & Sons*, the famous Paula Deen’s restaurant...ribs, southern fried chicken and all the sides...what’s not to like?

The entire trip went so well. Our unflappable Carol Shamonsky and all the NAMGAR staff did such a wonderful job to make our trip so much fun!

So after a wonderful trip to Johnny's birthplace all I can say is: *"There's such a lot of world to see... We're after the same rainbow's end... Waiting 'round the bend"* - and we are so fortunate to see it in an MGA!



The whole group, Tybee Island, Ga.