



## Herman's Big Adventure

A Report on the 2016 KisselKar Klub Meet, June 24-26,

By Andrew Wilson

[revised July 29, 2016]

The December, 2015 *Kisselgraph* first brought us news that the KisselKar Klub was planning a meet in June, 2016. My wife, Cindy, agreed with me that this would likely make for an interesting summertime adventure. What follows is my story of the events and times surrounding our participation in the 2016 Klub Meet.

The Nash Car Club would also be meeting with us on this weekend, which was certain to add even more life, energy and spice to the event.

We happily began the planning to transport our 1914 KisselKar 4-40 Touring to Hartford. We call the car **Herman**, named in honor of the lead engineer of the Kissel Motor Car Company, Herman Palmer.

Herman is one of only three surviving "Forties" out of the 300 or so that were originally produced by Kissel in 1914. The other survivors are **Grant's Special** (a Semi-Racer owned by **John Quam**) and **Annie** (a Touring owned by **Lynn and Jeanne Kissel**).

Our initial interest in attending the 2016 Meet was greatly elevated when we subsequently learned that all Herman's fellow, surviving Forties would be there, too. This would be our first opportunity to see these cars and meet their owners.

We don't know too much about the history of Herman before 1959, but we believe that a restoration was performed about 1957. That's the date on a drawing of the trans-

mission made by John Millerbough, the owner of Herman at that time. John may have purchased the car from the (now defunct) Powers Auto Museum in Southington, Connecticut, about 1957.

Robert T. DeForest, my grandfather, purchased Herman from John Millerbough in the fall of 1959. My grandparents regularly showed the car and participated in several Glidden Tours in the 1960s and 1970s. I've been involved with using and maintaining the car since 1994 and formally became the owner in 1999. We tour with the car and have exhibited Herman at the Greenwich Concours d'Elegance in 1998, 2002 and 2015.

### January 2016...

To get Herman to Hartford, I contracted with *Intercity Lines* to do the transport.

**Dawn Bondhus Mueller**, executive director of Wisconsin Automotive Museum, gra-



Herman circa 1965.

ciously agreed to take delivery before the meet. We also agreed to display Herman in the museum for a year following the meet.

Reservations at a Hartford hotel completed our early planning to attend the meet.

### **Fast forward to June...**

Initially I had planned to take two days to drive the 1,260 miles from Brunswick, ME to Hartford. Yet when Cindy investigated the costs of flying and renting a car in the area, we discovered that this quicker travel option was not that much more expensive. Deciding to fly, we purchased tickets on June 10 to get the best deal.

On June 11, Herman was successfully put on a truck and he was delivered without incident to the museum in Hartford on June 15. Herman was then resting, quiet as a turnip, with batteries disconnected, awaiting our planned arrival on June 23.

Dawn called to let me know that Herman was in the museum's garage. But she informed me that I had neglected to register for the meet! Thought I had done that in January. Dawn was very kind, accommodating and understanding. I immediately sent off my payment to fix this first glitch.

### **Thu, June 23 – Planned travel to Milwaukee...**

We were just getting ready to drive to the airport when we were notified that out-bound flight had been cancelled! After a quick call to the airline, we were rescheduled on a new flight on Friday the 24th getting into Milwaukee at 10:15 AM with us arriving in Hartford at 11:30 AM or later. This was a huge disappointment as we would be missing the start of the tour by almost 3 hours! Having no better option we booked the flights. Then I called the museum and hotel to let them know of the delay. The hotel didn't charge us for the night of the 23rd, which was very unexpected and appreciated.

### **Fri, June 24 – Car-tour day...**

A 3 AM wake-up was needed to get us to the airport in time for our rescheduled flight. Fortunately there were no delays and we landed in Milwaukee on time, gathered our luggage, picked up the rental car and headed out the door for the drive to Hartford. We arrived at the museum just before noon, nearly three hours *after* the departure of the meet tour earlier that morning.

One welcome sight upon our arrival was several Kissel cars parked outside the museum.

We hurriedly found Herman in the museum garage and discovered that our Meet 2016 "goodie bags" had been thoughtfully put on his seats. Instructions were received as to how we might connect with the tour-already in progress.

Reconnecting Herman's batteries and priming the cylinders, he sprang to life with the first press of the starter pedal. Good boy!

Soon we were motoring on the route to Holy Hill where we expected to find other



Herman on tour at Holy Hill. In the background are the scenic towers of the Basilica of the National Shrine of Mary Help of Christians.



members of the tour. Herman handled the rolling countryside well, cruising at around 35-40 MPH. While that may not sound fast to you, it is a good speed for the 102-year-old Herman.

Cindy used my phone to shoot some video as we traveled through the Wisconsin countryside. Being distracted by the pleasure of the ride, we missed one turn and needed to turn around.

Soon we arrived at our destination and spotted Grant's Special, choosing to park next to John Quam's 1914 Semi-Racer.

To my surprise, Herman did not want to stop running when I switched his ignition off! Eventually I purposefully stalled him to stop the engine. **John Lewis** noticed that the magneto ground wire had become disconnected and the nut had gone missing along our tour route.

Cindy and I took a few pictures of the Nashs and the three KisselKars in the parking lot and talked with **Andy Rosenberger and his family** about their 1909

LD-9.

We considered going on the extended Nash Tour but decided to head back to the museum instead. We were the last old car to leave Holy Hill.

The trip back from Holy Hill certainly was an adventure. Herman was running fine until I made a wrong turn because of road construction and subsequent road closures. I pulled into a parking lot to turn around.

Now Herman has a very touchy clutch; let it out too fast he lurches and stalls; let it out slowly, give it too much gas, and he still lurches and stalls. Well, I was trying to find the happy medium, and he stalled. I restarted, he stalled again. Went to restart and the batteries didn't have it in them for one more start. We waited a while and got one more battery start and you guessed it, stalled again!

Knowing I needed new batteries, the ones in Herman were from June, 2011, I called the local NAPA store and asked if they had



Tour cars and drivers arrive at the Venerable Fire Collection in Slinger, WI.



the two 7244 6V batteries that we have in Herman. They didn't but could get them to the store by 8:30 AM tomorrow, Saturday, so I ordered them.

I tried one more battery start but there was not enough “juice” left to turn the engine over. I was able to crank start Herman and then he stalled again! I've never had so much trouble starting out in Herman in my life and I have 34 years experience driving him. He wouldn't even crank start.

Fortunately a nice couple asked if we needed a push, soon Herman was started and this time didn't stall. The good Samaritans lead us back to the museum just a mile away.

When we arrived at the museum, I had to purposefully stall Herman to stop the engine. You can imagine my frustration as it seemed that I could not keep the car running when I wanted nor stop him from running when I wanted.

We parked behind Lynn and Jeanne Kissel's Annie, the first time that the two 1914 4-40 Tourings had ever been together. John Quam's 1914 4-40 Semi-Racer was also there so now all three of the surviving 4-40s were together. It was a momentous occasion for us.

Soon we met Lynn and Jeanne Kissel as they were being guided by **Doug and Sheila Kissel** on a private tour of local cemeteries. The four were driving in Annie to view the graves of the Kissel patriarchs, Conrad Kissel (Doug's great-great grandfather), Louis Kissel (great grandfather), William L Kissel (grandfather) and George A Kissel (granduncle). Louis, Will and George were the principal founders of the Kissel Motor Car Company.

Cindy and I now spent some time in the welcomed air-conditioned comfort of the museum. We took in the amazing display of Kissel-built cars. A museum volunteer



Doug Kissel points to the inscription on the grave marker of Conrad Kissel (b.1812, d.1872). Doug's great-great grandfather brought the Kissel family to Washington County, WI, in 1857. Conrad's son Louis, and grandsons George A and William L would eventually form the Kissel Motor Car Company in 1906.

ran the Lionel trains for us as we enjoyed a cold root beer. The drink really “hit the spot.”

In our wanderings around the museum, we met **Peter Klug**, a Kissel owner who also works at the museum. Discussing our missing magneto ground-wire nut, Peter let us look through a box of orphan nuts for one that might fit, but none did. With another push start, we managed to get Herman into the museum garage where I removed his batteries.

Pete directed us to a local hardware store, Hahn's. Cindy removed one of the other brass nuts from the magneto as a sample to match threads. After a short ride in our rental car to the store, we learned that the missing nut from Herman's Bosch DU4 magneto was a metric M5 nut. We bought two for ten cents.

When we returned to our hotel, we found Lynn Kissel and several other Klub members in the lobby. **Joe Leaf** had a iPad tablet and readily pulled up pictures of Herman. One was an early shot of Herman after my grandfather bought him in 1959 sporting non-skid tires and the 1067EA Connecticut plate. I estimate that the picture was taken in about 1965.

Joe then showed me another picture I hadn't seen before. It was taken from the back seat with my grandfather driving, top down, a yellow wood-paneled station wagon is seen coming from the opposite direction.

Alfresco (open air) dining at the Norbert in nearby West Bend and a stop at a grocery store to buy supplies for tomorrow's car show completed a very long and exciting day. Unsurprisingly, Cindy and I quickly fell asleep as soon as our heads hit the pillow.

### **Sat, June 25 – Car show day...**

Getting up fairly early, we had a wonderful time chatting with Jeanne Kissel and others in the hotel lobby for breakfast.

After breakfast we went to the NAPA store and were rewarded with two new batteries, just as promised. As I already had the old ones out of Herman, I avoided a \$36 core charge and another trip to the store.

Arriving at the museum, the garage door was open. Taking on-

ly about 5 minutes, I had installed Herman's new batteries while Cindy attached the magneto ground wire. I went through Herman's starting ritual and after a few healthy turns he started right up.

Backing out of the garage, we parked behind John Quam's car. The three surviving Forties sat proudly in a line: Annie, Grant's Special and Herman.

Here are the Kissels that I noted on the tour, on display or in the parking lot during this event. Apologies if I missed your vehicle.

1909 KisselKar LD-9 Touring (car# 2007) owned by Joan Rosenberger and family

1911 KisselKar WS-11 Toy Tonneau (car# 1966) owned by Tony Pienta

1914 KisselKar 4-40 Touring (car#



Show cars, part 1 (l to r) – 1927 Brougham (LeMaster), 1927 Speedster (Thomas), 1923 Speedster (Hausmann), 1911 Toy Tonneau (Pienta) and 1928 Brougham (Neu & Fredrick).



15068, aka Herman) owned by Andrew and Cindy Wilson

1914 KisselKar 4-40 Semi-Racer (car# 15314, aka Grant's Special) owned by John Quam

1914 KisselKar 4-40 Touring (car# 15471, aka Annie) owned by Lynn and Jeanne Kissel

1923 Kissel 6-45 Speedster (car# 45-7245) owned by Ronald Hausmann

1923 Kissel 6-55 Phaeton (car# 55-1913) formerly owned by Del Beyer who has donated it to the Wisconsin Automotive Museum

1927 Kissel 8-65 Speedster (car# 65-1482) owned by Mark Thomas

1927 Kissel 8-75 Brougham (car# 75-5033) owned by Gary and Diane LeMaster

1928 Kissel 8-80S Brougham (car# 80-2550) owned by David Neu and Bruce Fredrick

I took a lot of pictures of the Kissels as Cindy entertained the curious admirers with stories and answers to their questions about Herman. Then I took pictures of the all the Nashs and spoke with some of the owners.

John Quam asked to see Herman's carburetor, as he was having trouble with the fuel delivery on Grant's Special. John noticed one of Herman's manifold studs was missing. I wonder how long that's been gone? We learned that the museum owned the remains of a 1912 4-40 Touring that had been de-

stroyed in a fire. It is affectionately known to some locals as **The Crispy Critter**. Unfortunately we were unable to successfully remove the needed stud, welded in place by time and fire.

As the day progressed, Cindy and I used the coupons from our goody bag to get a sweet and creamy treat at Scoop Deville, a short walk from the show. Some excellent ice cream was a refreshing respite from the heat of the day.

When we returned, Lynn Kissel was driving people around a small loop of Hartford in Annie. As I'm typically the driver and rarely a passenger, I waited for my turn to jump in the back seat. With my phone at the ready I shot some short videos of the drive.

Annie and Herman look and feel much the same, with the exception that Annie's clutch is smoother. Lynn has adjusted the leather cone-clutch dimples so the clutch engages a bit more gradually. When the ride was over I shot some additional video of Annie in motion, and of the Tony Pienta's bright-red 1911 Toy Tonneau.



Show cars, part 2 (l to r) – 1914 Touring (Kissel), 1914 Semi-Racer (Quam), 1914 Touring (Wilson) and 1909 Touring (Rosenberger).



The *Crispy Critter* “trophy” and associate certificate that was awarded to Andrew and Cindy Wilson.

At 3:30 PM we started Herman and I drove him around the parking lot and back into the museum garage, disconnected the batteries and headed back to the hotel to get cleaned up and ready for dinner at the museum.

We arrived back at the museum a little after 5 PM and had time for refreshments and pleasant conversations as we chose our seats. Cindy and I sat with Lynn and Jeanne Kissel, Ron Hausmann, Mark Thomas and Dale Anderson.

As fortune would have it we were the first table to be called to fill our plates at the buffet. The food was very good and everyone had plenty to eat. For dessert there were three beautifully decorated cakes: one commemorating our Kissel Meet 2016; another the Wisconsin Auto Museum's 30th Anniversary; and the third the establishment of Kissel (1906) and Nash (1916). The cakes were delicious and served with either vanilla or chocolate ice cream. There was more than enough for everyone.

After dinner, Dawn Bondhus Mueller said a few words and thanked us all for attending. She did an amazing job and hosted a great event, one that we'll not soon forget. She let us know the Kissel wine glasses on the tables were ours to keep. The next

speaker was the President of the Nash Club who said a few words and let the Nash members know their continued ceremonies and awards would be held upstairs. Once they had adjourned with the advice to take their chairs, the KisselKar Klub meeting and awards began.

Lynn Kissel took the podium and addressed the business portion of the meeting. First up was approval of a **mission statement and bylaws** for the Klub. There were a couple of suggestions and corrections to the wording that were accepted. The amended documents were unanimously approved by a voice vote of those present.

The award ceremony was next. Winners were announced and called to the podium to receive their award. (See the list of award winners elsewhere in this issue.)

Of special interest to Cindy and me was the *Crispy Critter* award. Several nominees, including Cindy and me, were invited to describe the difficulties and complications that surrounded our partition at the meet. Other nominees included Peter and **Thomas Klug**, Doug Kissel and John Quam. It fell to Cindy to describe our problems with cancelled flights, dead batteries, missing magneto nuts and so on. I





Annie takes a soaking when her cover proves no match for a Wisconsin thunderstorm.

guess she made a compelling case as we won the award by the loudest applause when the audience judged the nominees.

A final, special Guiding Light award (which included a neat flashlight) was given to Dale Anderson for his 35+ years of sustaining the Klub and making the auto museum a reality.

After the awards were over people mingled and chatted, with a few saying their goodbyes. Lynn Kissel did an informal poll asking about a date for our next meet. Many felt that **Kissel Meet 2020** had a nice ring to it.

As is customary Cindy and I were the last ones to leave.

### **Sun, June 26 – Museum breakfast and farewells...**

Thunderstorms swept across Hartford during night. I awoke at 6 AM to see that the cover on Annie had blown off in the night and she was looking very wet. Seeing Lynn heading for his car, I helped him empty about 10 gallons of water from his cover that had become a rain bucket. I was surprised to see that Annie's interior was relatively dry considering all the rain. We went back inside and chatted over a light breakfast and coffee in the hotel lobby.

Later at the museum breakfast, we shared pleasant stories while taking pictures of the Kissels on display.

Peter Klug and I went to the Crispy Critter engine. Pete soaked all the nuts and studs with the penetrating oil, put a lock nut on a broken manifold stud and easily removed it from the engine. He wiped it off and put it in a small bag and gave it to me to aid in my search for the correct thread pitch of a new bolt. Meanwhile he would let another bolt soak and used some torch heat to successfully remove the other manifold bolt for me.

Before we knew it, it was time for Cindy and me to head for the airport. We reluctantly said our goodbyes and headed out. None of our flights were delayed and we made it back home to Brunswick Maine by 10:15 PM. One minor hardship on the trip home was a plane with insufficient AC from Milwaukee to Chicago, a 20 minute flight.

I want to thank Dawn Bondhus Mueller for creating and orchestrating such an excellent event and all her help with the delivery of Herman and his stay at the museum. Lynn and Jeanne Kissel for their hard work on the awards, Klub roster, newsletter, website and friendship. Dale Anderson for his foresight, guidance and stories and a big thank you to all the people we met who made us feel welcome and appreciate these rare cars.

The videos I shot during the meet can be found on **my YouTube channel**, search for **adawil2002** and my Andrew Wilson channel should be the first on the list.

### **Acknowledgements**

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