

Memories of Miatas in Michigan

By Jim Jones

Editors Note: Jim and Joy Jones participated in a tour of lighthouses organized by the Serwatkas of the Lake Effect Miata Club. Jim submitted this article too late for the Open Road, as I had another article concerning the tour. I promised him it would be in a future issue and it would be great reading on a cold winter's day. You be the judge....



Having received models of the Michigan City, MI and the Cape Haterras, NC lighthouses, and a lighthouse picture book as gifts, but never having seen a lighthouse up close, Joyce and I were eager to go on the "Lighthouses of Michigan" tour. We decided to head up early and visit the two Michigan City lighthouses on our own.

On Friday, Joy and I packed the car, dropped the top and headed north for Michigan City on Friday. We had reserved a room a stones throw from the tour starting point and about 20 minutes from Michigan City. At the edge of town, we stopped at a Harley shop to buy a t-shirt and get directions to the lighthouses. Evidently the young lady thought we wanted to go to the lighthouse shops, what nut would want to visit the real lighthouses? We ended up at the Lighthouse Outlet Mall! The mall is outstanding and Joy became excited about the possibility of shopping. Lucky for me, the Miata's trunk was full and we had little time for shopping. Unlucky for me on this Friday the 13th was that a return shopping trip looms in the future!

At the Mall, we did receive directions to the lighthouses. Approaching the lighthouse from the bathing beach area was an awesome sight! (The sunbathers weren't bad, either....) That evening I returned to view it during the sunset and snapped some pictures of it lighted up as it grew darker.

The next morning we were joined by over 40 Miata's in an array of colors, including one yellow, representing four clubs- Lake Effect, Windy City, Lake Dunes, and Indy Miata. Conrad and Judy Serwatka, our Tour Masters, had organized everything down to a "T". At the starting point, we received a lighthouse t-shirt, a list of the ten lighthouses we were going to see, a bag of snacks, and an information packet. This packet included pictures and descriptions of the lighthouses plus questions for a rally. It was a scavenger hunt rally and kept the navigators busy the first day.

On Saturday, we visited the St. Joseph Lighthouses, South Haven Light and the Ludington Light. Unfortunately we had to bypass the Holland Harbor "Big Red" lighthouse and the Grand Haven lights due to traffic jams of beachgoers and time constraints for our scheduled buffet luncheon at Kuiper's Sandy Point.

In Ludington, we checked into our hotel, then visited the North Pierhead Light. Since we had to get ready for dinner, we decided to visit the Big Sable Point Lighthouse early Sunday morning, which was a 45 minute walk from the parking area in Ludington State Park.

At Gibb's restaurant, Conrad and Judy had arranged a separate dining room for all 88 of us, where after dinner, prizes were presented to the rally winners, as well as door prizes. The prizes were outstanding, we did win a \$35.00 gift certificate from "The Dealer Alternative". Joy bemoaned the fact that a deer grazing on the side of the road distracted her and kept us from placing higher!

On Sunday, we rose at 6:00AM in order to visit the Big Sable Light, but on the way, we gave in to our hunger and thirst and stopped at McDonalds. After a driving miscue, we finally found the State Park, but we feared we would not have time for the hour and a half round trip hike and return to the hotel for our 10:00 departure time. We did purchase postcards of the light, so we do know what beauty we missed, and have a reason to return.

After departing Ludington, the tour headed south and stopped at the Pentwater Harbor Lights, the Little Sable Point Lighthouse, the White River Lighthouse, and we ended at the Muskegon Lighthouse.



Forty-four Miatas getting ready to roll.

The routes to the lighthouses took us on some gorgeous curve-hugging Miata roads through beautiful harbor towns and resort areas-very scenic and much fun indeed! The 44 Miatas in line looked very impressive as we cruised along. Friendly people waved, yelled and smiled as the colorful parade of roadsters passed them by.

Since we were over 300 miles from Indy at tour's end in Muskegon, we decided to overnight in Holland, MI and the next morning we went and saw "Big Red" which we had missed on Saturday due to traffic. From a brochure that was in our tour packet, I learned that you could drive to a private resort, park and walk to "Big Red" and see it up close. It was fun finding it and seeing it up close. The drive to the resort was beautiful, too, but then we had to head home on not so beautiful interstate highways.

We traveled 861 miles, had great weather, and a splendid tour of lighthouses on wonderful roads. Hats off to Judy and Conrad for organizing a great tour.

(Other members of the Indy Miata Club who participated were: Don and Teri Dyson, Eric Drumwright and Ann Cole, Don and Dee French, Barney and Carolyn LaFollett and Michael and Sharon Suit.)