

Tbirders in Texas

Last year, long time Balclutha hot rodders Tom and Christine Taylor enjoyed an awesome 'trip of a lifetime' to the US.

The couple rented a convertible from L.A., went to the Petersen Museum, up the coast to the Poor Boys Midnight Mass at Sacramento, beers at Kiwi Konnection in Bakersfield, Sacramento Nostalgia Drags, and on to Hot August Nights at Reno for four days. They then went on to Salt Lake City where they picked up a rented Harley Ultra-Glide and went to Sturgis where they saw ZZ Top play. "After cruising around Wyoming to Yellowstone etcetera, we weaved our way back to Salt Lake City through Idaho and other States, having fun with a BBQ with some trailer-park boys on the way before dropping the bike off," says Tom. "We then picked up a renter 'people mover' and headed to Bonneville to take in the salt. Bloody magic! And in true kiwi form we met a woman from here in Balclutha, (amongst other kiwis). We knew each other well, but didn't know we'd be there. Small world eh? We saw some impressive runs and took scads of photos, and three days later headed back to Salt Lake City."

Christine and Tom then flew out to Dallas where they experienced some incredible American hospitality. Tom's a

member of the Squarebirds forum www.squarebirds.org which is dedicated to Ford Thunderbirds. Through the forum they'd 'met' Debbie and Leonard, who had offered to put them up for three or four days at their place in Azle, Texas. "At that stage we only knew them by email," explains Tom. "Well, you couldn't meet better people and we were treated as celebrities by them and the mayor etcetera. We had one of those official welcomes and the Chief of Police, who was standing in for the Azle mayor, presented us with a formal proclamation making us 'Honorary Citizens of the City of Azle' and granting us 'All the Privileges and Rights Of a Citizen of Azle'. Long story short, we ended up staying with Debs and Leonard for ten days before heading to Las Vegas, L.A. and home.

Leonard and all the other Americans who are into hot rods and street machines were constantly astounded at the volume and quality of American cars in New Zealand, and that we drive them with the price of gas being so high. It was the equivalent of NZ\$8 a gallon in New Zealand when I was over there, and they were stunned; their prices were about US\$2:80 to \$3:15 a US gallon at the time."



■ Tom (left) and Leonard at the Christian Classic Cruisers car show in Hurst, Texas. They're standing in front of a 428 Cobra Jet and four-speed Toploader '69 Fairlane that they were both most impressed with.



■ Leonard's '58 Thunderbird, which is all original. "I was lucky enough to take it for a cruise," says Tom. "Man it was hot driving it, as the temperatures were over 100F a lot of the time (almost 40C) and the T-bird did not have air-cond!"