

Sideroads

A Bus Trip to Remember



20 Delta Tau Brothers packed a converted school bus on their 3,600-mile trek to Convention.

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Last winter several of our brothers were kicking around the idea of renting a motor home and driving to Convention in St. Louis. But that would only get six of us there. At Delta Tau, we roll deep, so I suggested we buy an old school bus and convert it to hold 20. We had a good laugh, but left it at that.

A few weeks later, Steve Lennartz, *Cal Poly-Pomona '98*, and I were driving back from a 12-brother Utah snowboarding road trip and were joking about the bus idea. We were talkin' big about all the trick stuff we could do to it: paint it red and gold; tile floor; huge stereo system; vinyl graphics; pimp fabric; big screen TV; police p.a. speaker, blah blah blah. Just big talk to make the Utah miles go by quicker. A few hours after I got home, Stezo sent me an email with several links on where we could buy old school buses.

"Damn!" I thought: "I guess we're doing this."

From there, it was pedal to the metal. We did some research on the types of buses, conversion info, insurance, and the Mother Road, historic Route 66. I proposed a plan of 20 brothers at \$250 each for the project. All seats were filled in 48 hours.

In April, we found the perfect bus, a 1990 International V-8 diesel automatic. However, with Founders' Day, Greek Week, and formal, we didn't start working on it till the end of May—only 10 weeks before Convention. We did all the work at S&S Engineering, our family sheet metal shop. The brothers would work on it after work and on weekends. The final result: she seats 22, sleeps 18, has a bathroom, a kitchen, air conditioning, a generator, a 1200W inverter, 75 cu. ft. of storage, and shelves that drop down into bunk beds.

We left 24 hours late, Sunday morning, about 4 a.m. on Aug. 1. We set forth to conquer Route 66/Hwy 40 all the way to St. Louie with Brother Aaron Stump, *Cal Poly-Pomona '95*, piloting

the first leg.

She ain't a rocket ship. The hills were sloooow. To make up for lost time, we drove through the nights. Cards, tunes, movies on the big screen, snapping pictures, shooting video, and various stops at roadside attractions were the plan. We checked out some of the old-school Route 66 freakness—including the abandoned Twin Arrows gas station and Meteor City in Arizona, the Blue Swallow Motel and Bambino's restaurant in Tucumcari, N.Mex., and of course the Cadillac Ranch west of Amarillo, Tex. A dozen





of us drove in shifts, which made it easy. Several Flying J truck stops (including the Sayre, Okla., stop, where we ran out of gas just as we pulled in) and 56 hours later, we cruised down the center of the Gateway City.

Other chapters couldn't believe that we rolled 20 Delta Tau monkeys in a bus to convention. That was about half of our invasion force of 39 at Convention! An all-time record, even for us.

The total trip was 3,600 miles, at just over a grand in fuel. With the map of the trip on the side of the bus, it only made sense to have people sign it along the way. We met Vance Hall, *Oklahoma State '99*, at the Cadillac Ranch. He was across the highway when his boss's daughter called him to tell him that a bus load of his fraternity brothers from California were at the Ranch. But the best was outside Bambino's in New Mexico. We were eating breakfast inside when an older gentleman walked inside and asked, "Do you guys know John M. Green?" (John is Executive Director of the Phi Kappa Tau Foundation.) We found out that the man who spotted our bus was a vice president at the bank John was president of back in Nebraska!

Small world.

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Pictures:

Opposite page, top-left: Erik Griffin, Cal Poly-Pomona '97, at the helm. **Left,** Stephen McKenna, Cal Poly-Pomona '03, prepares to strip the bus of its school-bus yellow paint.

Above, the Delta Tau crew outside the bus somewhere in Texas. **Right,** an inside view of the bus.

