

Sprockets make stop on Scott Mountain

By Mickey Bryant
The Choctaw Sun

SCOTT MOUNTAIN—How did a 1962 Bristol double-decker bus get to Carney Grocery on Scott Mountain Tuesday May 15? It came around the world through 50 countries.

In 1997, Scott, Isabelle (Izzy) and Theo started on their journey as The Sprockets World Tour.

At an early age, Scott's parents realized he liked to dream big, and work to accomplish his dreams while. At 16, he started an ice cream business from his bicycle called "Scott's Ice Cream", which is still in operation in Bath, England. At 25 he opened a successful juggling shop. Then in 1992 he formed Captain Bob's Circus.

Izzy, born in Toulouse, France, raised in Morocco and Algeria, managed a very successful South London restaurant. Working seven days a week, saving every penny. In 1991 she used it to attend circus school.

Scott and Izzy met at the now legendary Captain Bob's Circus.

Theo's home has been the bus since he was born in 1996 in Toulouse France, the world his playground since he could crawl. In the first five years of his life, he visited 17 countries.

After performing throughout Europe for 5 years, they decided to do a world tour, financing



Choctaw Sun Photo by Mickey Bryant

Choctaw County Hospitality

After touring over 50 countries The Sprockets world tour was treated to some Choctaw County hospitality by the folks on Scott Mountain when they made a stop at Carney Grocery. Izzy Feraud (left) and Scott Harrison (right) demonstrate juggling and unicycle riding.

their entire journey with their circus Comedy show.

In 1997 they uprooted and bundled their entire lives into their 1962 double-decker bus and embarked on the ultimate road trip.

The bus already had a history, it was used in Bournemouth for 25 years before being semi retired as a driver-training vehicle. After completing over 1,000,000 miles on the south coast of England, the bus was fitted out as a circus bus.

Starting the trip as

The Nashville Sprockets, they performed a show with Coreen Hartley, stilt walker and country singer.

When they got to Italy they met with good weather, great food and generous people such as Pascal Cornier, a French engineer, who joined them with his dog Cartouche. Pascal traveled with them to India where he left the group. All along they way they met with both good times and bad.

When they entered into Iran where they found the cheapest diesel fuel. They filled their tank (38 gallons) for less than \$2 (US). Their last fill up in England cost \$130(US). In Iran the bus had to cope with extreme temperatures. To prevent overheating, Pascal Cornier, their French mechanic, fitted two fans from scrap Mercedes behind the upstairs radiators.

They said in Pakistan where the roads were so bad, their Dutch bicycles proved to be a faster mode of transportation. Sometimes they had to rebuild the roads just to get thru. Eleven miles from the

Tibetan border, while working with children on a holiday camp, they met Sandji, principal of The British School in Katmandu. She invited them to her school, where for three months they taught the children circus skills and helped the 6 grade put on their own production.

During their trip they also faced medical problems; Theo had Malaria in Calcutta and Scott in Bangladesh.

They said living in the bus was rendered impossible in Bangladesh because of the heat, mosquitoes and the overwhelming crowd. The Whitlesey family put them up in their house for over 3 months while they were trying to organize a boat for Singapore. They turned a nightmare into a fun, enjoyable and unforgettable moment of this trip.

To get to Singapore they had to transport their bus on a container ship. They had to lash the bus to a 40ft flat rack by steel cables. Getting the bus on the rack was no easy task, it took them 12 hours to build a ramp out of scrap materials and the bus nearly overturned when one side of the ramp collapsed. The other crossing (Singapore/Freemantle(Oz) and Brisbane(Oz)/Auckland(NZ) were much easier as they were on a roll on/roll off.

In New Zealand, they were flown to Dubai for the 10 week Summer Surprises Festival, by Sid and

Max of Circus Works.

Theo enjoyed his stay in New Zealand, because he started to learn how to read at the Takaka Primary school in Golden Bay.

Scott said that the generosity of the people in New Zealand is how they got to South America.

When they arrived in Chile, they were amazed by the thousands of talented jugglers, acrobats and aerial artists "busking" or performing at traffic lights.

In Valparaiso, Chile, that they met up with Mauricio and Felipe. Together they exchanged skills and ideas and worked on a new show incorporating Aerial skills. With this new fun group (and family) they toured South America.

In Peru, 107 miles North of Lima, they met the most talented bunch of thieves on their trip. The thieves took their 3 Dutch bikes that they have had from the beginning of this trip while they were sleeping just inches away.

In Quito, Ecuador, they met Ariel Tozi who was fantastic at helping them getting contracts and finding a school for Theo.

When they got to Cali, Colombia, they encountered "Circo para todos", a social circus school, who provided them with a place to train and park the bus while they were touring Brazil (The Amazon), Uruguay and Argentina.

On route to San Pedro de l'Atacama, high in the Chilean Andes, they set a

new altitude record for a double-decker bus of 10,000 feet. Lack of oxygen forced them to drive the bus at a maximum of 2 miles an hour which allowed them to exercise because they could hop in and out of the bus while driving along.

They couldn't find a boat crossing from Caracas to Panama at a decent price. Finally they crossed from Caracas to Guatemala. In Panaachel, Guatemala, they met with bad roads. They drove about 546 feet in 4 hours, rebuilding the road or mud path as they described it as they went.

In Chichiriviche, Venezuela, Julio, a one month old street dog adopted them and joined their tour. It took them days in offices in Caracas to get all the papers work for Julio the dog, to be able to leave Venezuela.

In Santo Tomas de Castillo, Jo Bertrandon, Theo's new schoolteacher joined the group. Together with the CNED (French home schooling) he has done a wonderful job.

The Sprockets spent the last year traveling Mexico.

This brought their trip here to the United States, where they have traveled through Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and finally to Scott Mountain, Alabama.

Scott said that they are traveling the back roads because the top speed of their bus is about 35 miles per hour.

Scott said that currently they are having problems with the rear axle and some friends of theirs in South Carolina are trying to get some parts for them. He also said that they hoped to make it to South Carolina by the weekend for a festival.

When they leave South Carolina, Izzy said they plan to go north along the east coast to Maine and then spend a season in Canada. Izzy also said they wanted to come back to the United States and tour the country, and may be even back to Choctaw County.

Scott said "All through out our trip, We performed the same show for the richest and the poorest" talking about The Sultan of Brunei and the street kids of Calcutta and Bangladesh.

Scott and Izzy said that the highpoint of their trip was being able to bring smiles to people of all walks of life.



Izabelle, Scott, Joe and Theo (in front) make up The Sprockets World Tour.

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