

When U. S. highway Route 66 was in its heyday—1926 to the late 1970's—Marathon coaches didn't exist; however, a Marathon coach is now instrumental in remembering "America's mother road." Marathon coach #0617, a 2000 XLV model, was used during the production of *Route 66 – The Marathon Tour*, a 14-part television series. *Route 66* is currently airing on Comcast NHD, high-definition television and HDNET, high-definition satellite. The series will air later this fall on the Discovery Channel.

The series covers the complete story of Route 66 from its folklore and history, through its de-commission, to its present status as a national historic site. The production starts in Chicago and covers the entire road to Los Angeles, containing 78 interviews conducted over 8 states.

As the automobile began to replace railroad travel in the mid-1920s, Route 66 became a two-lane avenue that connected farm roads to industrial America. More and more people ventured along the route through the Great Depression, World War II, the era that was folk music and the emergence of rock 'n roll. Single-pump gas stations, neon signs, drive-in movies, honky-tonks, truck stops and motels were the icons travelers saw along this historic route.

The road, which allowed many to follow the American dream, begins in Chicago, the



## ROUTE 66

### AMERICA'S MOTHER ROAD

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industrial capitol of the midwest. After visiting Chicago, the series heads south toward St. Louis, touches Kansas on the way to Tulsa, then goes through the Texas panhandle, New Mexico and Arizona to California's Santa Monica Pier.

Route 66 has been immortalized in song, book and film. Bobby Troupe, Will Rogers, Charles Kuralt and John Steinbeck all recognized the impact of the great American road on society. The program *Route 66* provides information about that influence from experts such as Michael

Wallis, author of *The Mother Road*; Tom Snyder, author of *Route 66 Traveler's Guide*; Tom Teague, author of *Searching for 66*; and Jim Ross, editor of *American Road Magazine*.

The series contains interviews of old-timers and visits enduring haunts in its pursuit of what was, and still is, along the 2,400-mile road to the Pacific Ocean. There's the White Fence Farm Restaurant, home to the "greatest chicken in the world," which is still run by the 90-year-old owner. The Rialto Square Theatre, designed after the famous Hall of Mirrors in the

Palace of Versailles near Paris, France, hosted headlining acts such as Red Skelton and Jerry Seinfeld since it opened in 1926.

In St. Louis, the restoration of the Union Railway Station into a shopping mall illustrates how distressed the former popular mode of travel has become since the invention of the automobile and highway infrastructure. The Wagon Wheel Motel in Cuba, Missouri still thrives, while the town square of Baxter Springs, Kansas echoes stories of past visitors such as outlaws Jesse James and Bonnie and Clyde.

In Tulsa, the oil capitol of the world, Art Deco buildings abound

in addition to some of the greatest food along the route. Further down the road, the world famous Big Texan Restaurant offers a free 72-oz. steak to anyone who can finish eating it in one hour. In Gallup, New Mexico the El Rancho Hotel once housed stars such as John Wayne, Ronald Reagan and Barbara Stanwick.

La Posada Hotel in Winslow, Arizona is a former Harvey House, owned by the Fred Harvey chain of restaurants, who built an empire around the railroad. His prestigious corps of waitresses, known as The Harvey Girls, served troops as they disembarked en route to their headquar-

ters. Another Route 66 icon is the Red Garter Inn, a former burlesque house turned bed and breakfast. In California, the Bagdad Café is a contemporary restaurant based on a classic movie featuring Jack Palance and a current television series starring Whoopie Goldberg. After visits to these and many other interesting sites, the tour ends in Hollywood, California.

Brian Greene of Greene HD Productions, Inc., headquartered in Arlington, Texas produced *Route 66 – The Marathon Tour*. This series is television programming at its finest. It may even persuade you to venture along this memorable route yourself. •