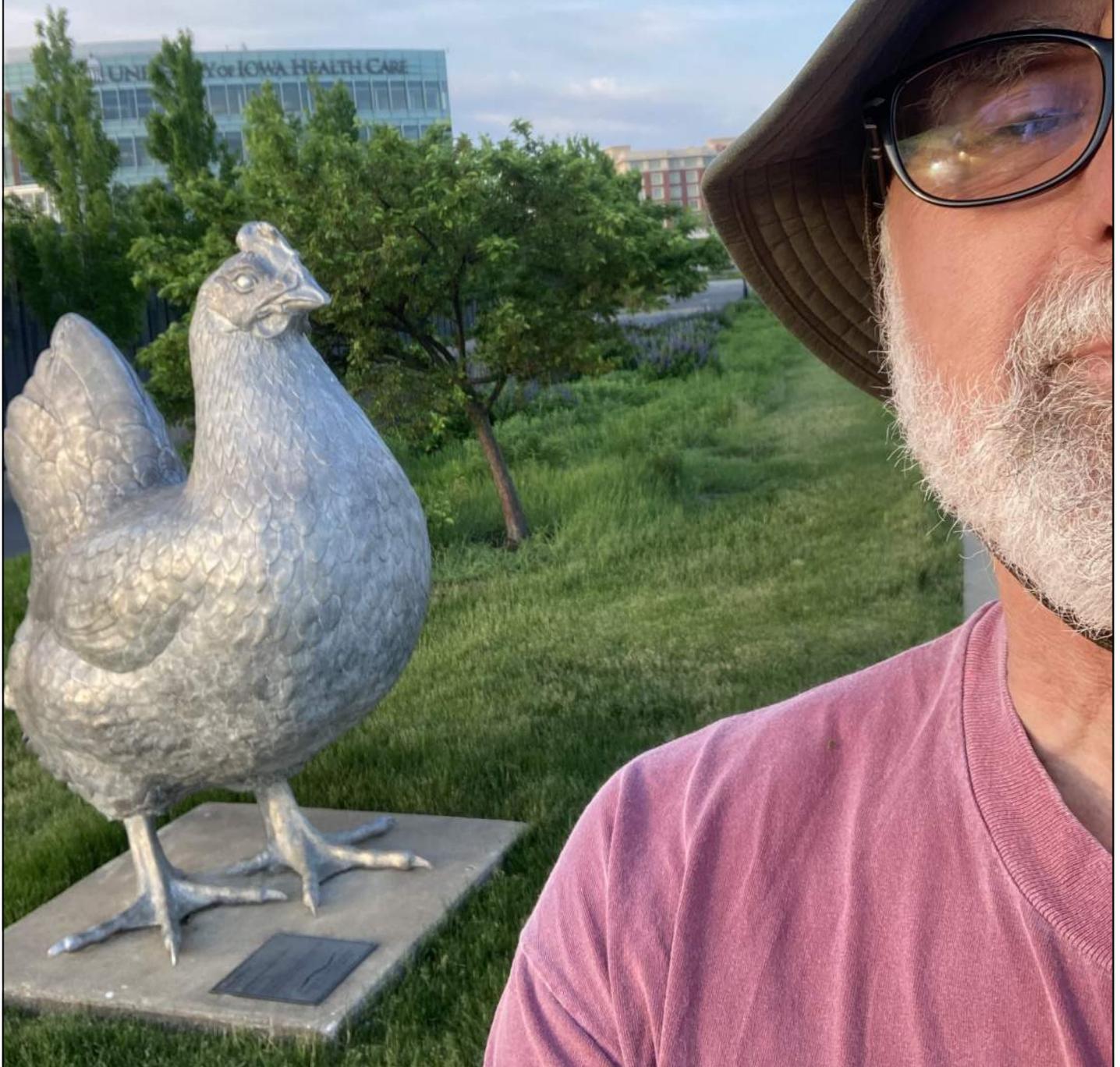


September 2022

Apex

Looking Through The Curve

Official newsletter of Bluegrass Beemers, Inc. Lexington, Kentucky
MOA #146 RA #49 <http://www.bluegrassbeemers.org>



The Giant Silver Chicken

CHECKING OFF THE LAST TWO STATES

By John Rice

It is an excuse for a trip, really, but it also fills a need, a silly need perhaps, not anything “real” but existential in its own way. I have, over more than a half-century of touring by motorcycle, ridden in all but two of the continental states. I have driven a car in Louisiana and Nebraska, but never set forth on a two-wheeled machine in either of them. Looking at a map I can see that on previous trips I have been close to both, but somehow didn’t take the time and trouble to dip over there and check them off the mental list.

Now in my twilight years, it seemed like a good idea to go somewhere I had not been before, so in my mid-70’s, I am going to do it.

One sunny late May morning, I pointed the Suzuki DR650, now in its touring clothes, south and went to the Natchez Trace Parkway, the most scenic way I could think of to get diagonally across Tennessee, Alabama and Mississippi. I chose the DR from the stable because of its lightness and simplicity which somehow seemed to fit the mission at hand. It is the Swiss Army Knife of motorcycles, if not perfectly suited for every use at least doing everything needed quite adequately.

After an overnight in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, I took route 96 in a long smile-like arc from there to Franklin TN and then after going under the Double Arch Bridge, up Rt. 100 to

the northern terminus of the parkway, starting back south. 96 is now a bucolic two lane road, going through farming country lined by fields of cows, horses and crops getting ready to grow. But the beginnings of a four-lane transformation are in progress and I sus-

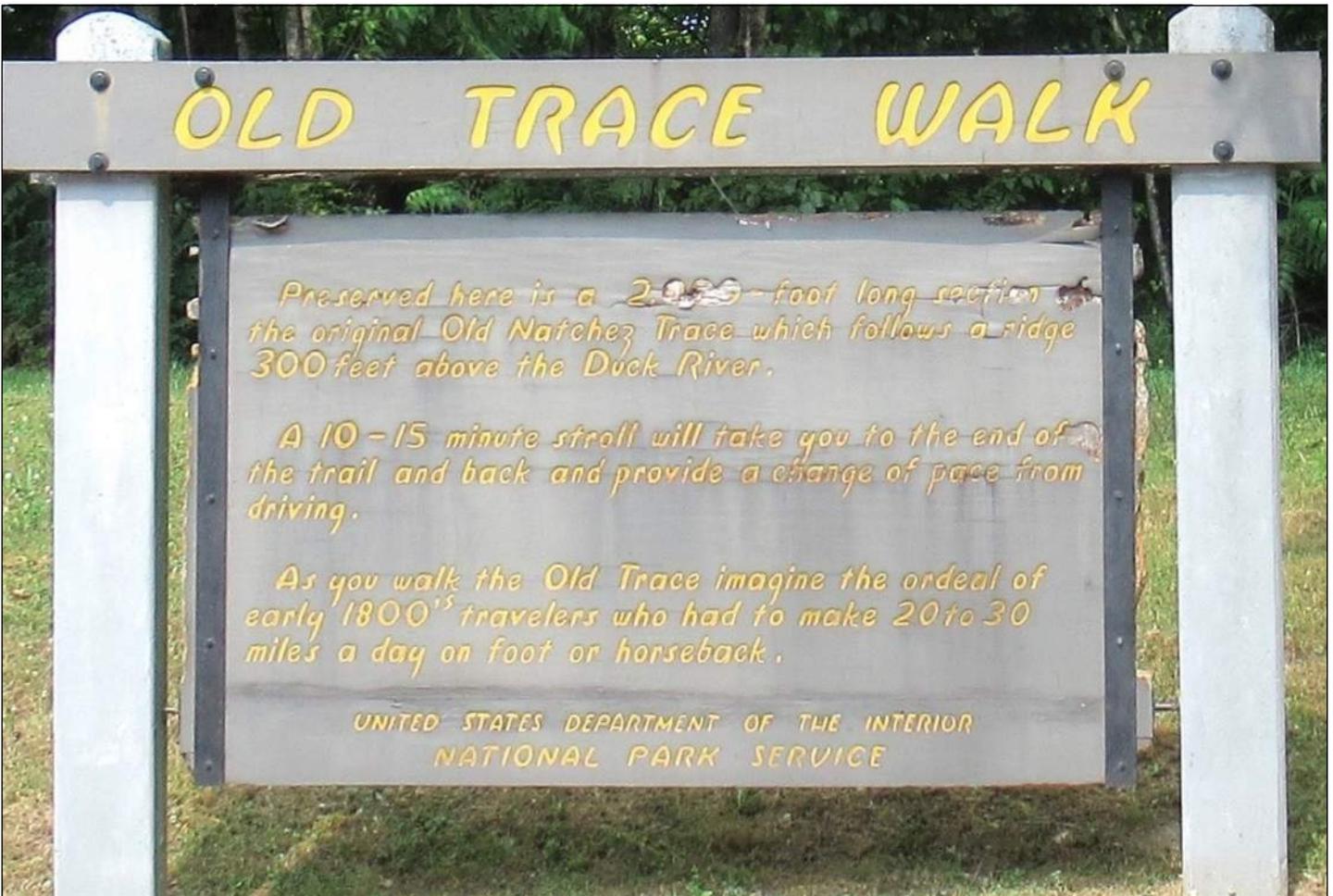


Double Arch Bridge

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**BMW Club
Bluegrass Beemers**



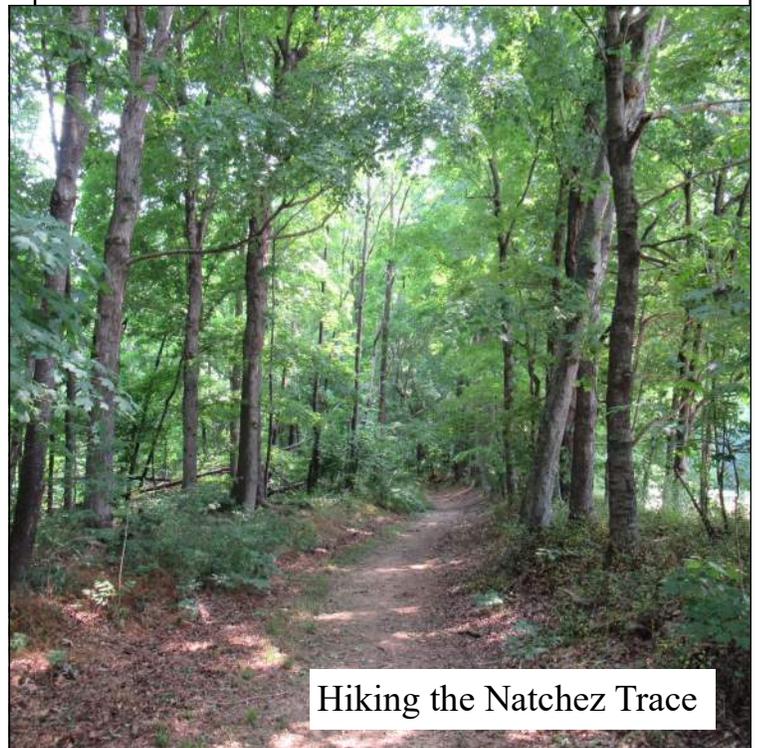


pect if there is ever another trip here, what I see now will be unrecognizable.

It was a nearly perfect morning ride on the Trace, cool air, cloudless blue sky, and almost no traffic. Hardly any curves to speak of, but that is not what this place is about. The Trace is what the Blue Ridge Parkway would be if someone ironed out all the elevations and pulled the bends mostly straight, not a sporting road, but nice nonetheless. It has that feel of last-century craftsmanship in the stacked-stone bridges and retaining walls, the overall ambiance of a park rather than a highway.

Down the Parkway I made several stops at historical markers, tried a short hike on a bit of the old original Trace restored for walking, took a drivable mile or two that the DR seemed to enjoy, wending through the

woods, and visited the grave marker of Meriweather Lewis who killed himself at a young age here along the Trace. Reports are that he



Hiking the Natchez Trace

had mental health issues, probably what we now call manic-depressive disorder, but I wonder if after the epic adventure he and Clark experienced, he might have thought there could be no sufficient encore.

A marker tells me that the Trace was part of the route taken by Jackson's troops on their way to what became the Battle of New Orleans. That song stayed stuck in my head for days.

Tupelo offered me a place to stay, just off the Parkway, with a good Thai restaurant close by. I was awakened in the night by the guy who apparently was practicing throwing his bowling ball against the wall downstairs. There were two such episodes, first at 1:30 and again at about 3:30, which lasted for about two minutes each. If I were in an old hotel next to a bank, I would say that someone was smashing through the concrete connecting wall for a heist.

The second day I came upon a gaggle of Model A cars and pickup trucks making their dignified way down the Trace I can smell the



Riding the old Trace

poorly burned fuel before I see them. They are spectacular in their perfect restorations. Some of the women passengers wear period-correct clothing. All of the drivers are male, almost all bald headed old men, most with beards. I would fit right in, if I knew anything about these cars.

I stopped for the night in Jackson, MS, not making it to Natchez as I had planned. The



At Jeff Busby Park, along the Trace



This would have been a good spot for lunch... if it was open on Sunday

heat and late start took their toll and I was ready to quit. The GPS led me to a spot that it said had a motel, but none was there. Nearby I found a Drury Inn, always a good choice since their every-night buffet is excellent and their morning offerings are full-cooked and even include real oatmeal.

I do miss the mom & pop little motels we used to stay in, without reservations or calling ahead. Just show up at about 4 or 5 or sometimes much later and almost always get a room, a cheap room with no “amenities”, just a bed and a bathroom with a shower. Back in those days they always reeked of stale tobacco smoke but we didn’t notice so much because in that time, so did everything else. It is only now after a few decades of living in a mostly smoke free world that the stench in those rooms is unacceptable. It burns the nose, makes me cough and leaves me with the feeling that something is sticking to my skin... probably because it is. And the only way to

get an actually smoke free room is to go to a totally smoke free motel since the ones that advertise that they have both smoke-free and smoking rooms invariably stink of smoke in every room. So here I am, in what would have been a last choice back a decade ago, a go-though-the-lobby style hotel, with an elevator and no outside entrances. The old ways of doing things just don’t work anymore and it is foolish of me to insist upon it.

Back on the Trace, I am now starting to get antsy to get this done and see Natchez. The Trace was pleasant, but by the end it reminded me of those old movies in which the actors are in a car mock-up on a set and the same scenery keeps rolling past the windows in an endless loop. Looking at a map, I can see that the path winds around a bit as it makes a diagonal across three states, but when down here on the ground, the direction changes aren’t really noticeable. Curves, when they appear, are “gentle”, more accurately, “unobtrusive“, like

some very professional butler nudging me into a slightly different direction without me being aware of it.

The ending is anticlimactic, just a kind of dribbling away into the surface streets of the town without much of a marker for the terminus. I spend a while just going up and down the streets of this historic little city. It is a river town, that much is clear, the “look” of such towns is unmistakable. I grew up in one and “I know it when I see it”.

I found a restaurant, “The Camp,” in the Natchez Under The Hill section down by the water which turns out to be the perfect place for lunch. The Cobb salad and specialty banana bread pudding are wonderful. From the window by my table I can watch a boat pushing several barges, making its way down the Mississippi River, taking something that folks farther south must need a lot of.

Going back to my bike, I encounter the New Hampshire motorcyclists that I have been running into over and over along the Trace. As I come up to my bike they are exclaiming to each other, “it’s the bike with the face!” They are headed from their New England home to a family gathering in Arizona, taking a leisurely route to see the country.

Finally, I cross the big river and make it into Louisiana, so one down and one to go. I find some curvy bits on my way north, badly paved enough to give the suspension a workout, but still enjoyable for offering the only discernible steering input I have had to make in almost three days.

The GPS leads me to a closed ferry, requiring a detour and the last few miles into West Monroe are 4-lane and nothing to write home, or here, about.

In the morning, I do the guessing game, waiting out a bubble of rainstorm, but then trying to get ahead of the big one, hail included, the Weather Channel app was predicting. I rode in mist, some light rain, but mostly cool and clear today, but often I had wet roads, as if I was following just behind the storm.

Crossing into Arkansas, I find that much of once-curvy Rt. 7 has now been 4-laned from Eldorado up to Camden. Apparently it will become I-69 soon. I did have to take a detour into Smackover, just to see what a town named that might look like.

Apparently the French settlers in 1686 called this area “*Sumac Couvert*”, which translates to “covered in sumac bushes”. This was phonetically Anglicized by the English-speaking settlers of the 19th century and later to the name “Smackover” which is more interesting on a road sign, drawing me in to have a look. I doubt that I would have detoured for a visit to “Covered in Sumac Bushes, Arkansas”

After Camden, Rt. 7 returns to the moderately twisty two lane I expected, nothing great but at least some lean angle is called for. About 25 miles south of Arkadelphia, a black bear was standing in the middle of the road, getting ready I think to chow down on a road-kill squirrel, but he high-tailed it down an open trail as I approached. I felt guilty for interrupting his meal.

I was beginning to get a bit nervous about gas, when Sparkman appeared with one station, appropriately named “Sparky’s”. Only one grade (fortunately a DR 650 will run on anything) and no card reader, so one must go inside and actually interact with a human to buy gas. How very retro.

Late in the afternoon, I stopped briefly in a small town, small enough that I can't recall the name, to catch up on my calories since I had skipped lunch. The Java Primo Coffeehouse offered a good bold brew and an apple dumpling with vanilla gelato on top. It was so good that only my last shred of decorum kept me from picking up the plate and licking it.

I got to Hot Springs about an hour ahead of the frog-strangler that hit suddenly, fiercely and then was gone, reduced to mere rain, in about 30 minutes. For that time, though, one couldn't see across the motel parking lot through the downpour.

I put on my Darien jacket and my hat and walked over across the parking lot to the Bleu Monkey Bar & Grille in the remaining drizzle. There were two groups of 20 people waiting to be seated, so I offered to go to the bar to get out of the way. I had a "Bubba Brews 10 Point Bock" which was surprisingly good and a "smashed avocado", blackened chicken salad. I have to move on tomorrow but it might be worth it to stay over and have that meal again. The bartender is an enthusiastic, extensively tattooed, young woman who seems to know everyone at the bar except me, but she approves of my beer and meal choices.

Rain continued most of the night, coming down in buckets, then stop, repeat, over and over. In the morning I left in a mist, some light rain, and headed north with predicted bad storms for the early afternoon. They never appeared.

Route 7 gets better as it proceeds north into the mountains, all the way to Jasper where I looked around for the motorcycle shop that I had been told had moved here from Eureka Springs. If it is here, it's well hidden, since there isn't much town to conceal it. Route 7's

nice curves are still wet but that can't dampen the pleasure of being here, going through small towns, or what used to be towns, but mostly out in the hills with only a few houses now and then to suggest what once was here.

Lunch came at the "Old Bank" grille in Russellville with a very good salad, probably one of the most enjoyable meals yet.

On Route 21 toward Eureka Springs I rescued a small terrapin from the road and was rewarded for my deed by him peeing on my finger...a horrible stench. I had to take my water bottle and pour water over my glove, much to the amusement of the folks in the car that passed by.

The road began drying out the further north I went and nearing Jasper, I was beginning to enjoy the curves...until I got behind a slow truck, pottering its way along. Finally I saw a clear passing opportunity and made my way around, but then as I was turning my head to see my clearance, I spotted the Cliff House Restaurant, perched on the hillside in my peripheral vision. I am sure the truck driver thought I was nuts as I immediately put on my turn signal and pulled off on the side of the road to turn around. Something about the place just told me that I would regret it if I passed it by. And that something was correct. Inside was an excellent apple pie, a spectacular view of the "Grand Canyon of Arkansas" and a good back story on the menu. (<https://cliffhouseinnar.com/about/>)

As the sun was fading I finally arrived at the "Best Western Inn of the Ozarks", (not to be confused with the other Best Western motel a few hundred yards away), very tired, more so than I thought I was.

The next day was for a Eureka Springs tour since the heavy downpour, scheduled to last

all day did exactly that. There is a trolley service, \$6 for a day pass, that has a stop right here at my motel and will take me anywhere I want to go around the town, getting on and off at will. The lady trolley driver, tells me that she and her husband had run a coin-op amusement machine business here until they retired from it. She told me about collecting the coins from the machines in local taverns early in the mornings, before customers arrived. “Any spilled quarters, requiring crawling around on a barroom floor, went straight into my pocket!”

The town is built on hillsides lining a valley that offered numerous hot springs with alleged medicinal powers. In the post Civil War era, soldiers often were sent here for recovery from their wounds and people from all over the world came to be healed. Wandering up the curving hill from the valley, there are old hotels and shops all along the sidewalk. The rain continues, but most of these storefronts have overhanging roofs or balconies that keep me fairly dry. One can see that this place was special in a time when the European influence in American culture was still strong, maintaining traditions and icons brought over by the immigrants who populated this land. The hotels look remarkably like those in the old cities across the Atlantic. I stop in an outfitter store that offers Tilley hats, a particular weakness of mine, made “with Canadian persnickitiness”, but left empty handed, still wearing my battered old faithful.

Many small restaurants line the street, but most are closed at this time, opening later for dinner, or only on weekends this early in the season. Shops seem split between high end clothing and jewelry vs. cheap t-shirts and junk, with not much to offer in between. The people out on the streets in the rain also seem

divided between very young folks, oblivious to the rain, and retirees like myself.

The next day came with that cool and clear air that follows a big storm, the sky washed clean with only a few puffy clouds for decoration, no rain in sight. While packing up, I met two young men, early 20’s, who had rendezvoused here for a motorcycle tour of the Ozarks, one coming from Pennsylvania on a Yamaha Tenere, the other one out of Billings, MT on a Harley. They didn’t have much in the way of baggage, relying on their youthful resilience and good luck to get them through. They reminded me of myself an awful lot of years ago, before their parents were born.

I’ve been picking up turtles from the road for decades and had read that one should put them on the side of the road they are facing, since turtles don’t wander far in their territory and it’s more likely that they will keep going on to safety. The first one today was on the center-line, facing down the road, so I flipped a mental coin and picked a side. Hope it was the right one for him.

Missouri seems to have some nice roads, tree lined, not really curvy but at least a bit of leaning required. I’m trying to avoid the big cities, now just focused on getting to the next state where I have a personal historical site to visit.

Crossing into Kansas, the long flat and straight roads begin, headed due west with that curious phenomenon out here where one can be encountering both a fierce headwind and still be pummeled by blasts coming from the side as well. A shaded picnic table showed up on the roadside at about 1, just in time for a nap

As I am almost to my destination, there suddenly is a “road closed” sign and a long detour many miles north, then west and south again to arrive 200 yards on other side of the damaged bridge. I’m starting to get worried about gas, finally getting to the station near that bridge, the one whose sign I could see from the place where the detour started, just as I was switching to reserve.

Late afternoon I got to the tiny town in east Kansas where my father was born at the beginning of the 20th Century and lived the first few years of his life in a one room sod house made by his father, an eastern Kentucky boy who had the wanderlust to leave the hills and head west. My grandfather’s influence, somewhere in the genes since he died long before I was born, may be the source of my constant need to be on the move, to see new places. The location, found by my wife’s research on the 1910 census, is now a vacant lot with no trace of any former dwelling. The streets are still unpaved. I stood there, thinking of the 5 year old barefooted boy who would become my dad running with his siblings on this dusty road, having no idea of the future that would include me and then ultimately this trip to here.

The sun was going down, though the air was not losing any heat, so I made the long slog into Lawrence KS, mostly 4-lane, not interstate but no difference, really. The temperature and constant battering of the wind are exhausting, since my days of youthful resilience are long, long behind me. The Doubletree Inn, became my refuge for the night, the only place that had a room available with a restaurant. Despite the name, the price was comparable to others, and it comes with a cookie.

That night, I reconsidered my original idea of spending a couple of days exploring Nebraska.

I’m not looking forward to more flat, straight roads with the endless wind. I will just go up a ways, along the river route and see what happens.

In the morning I detour over to Kansas City with the idea of visiting Engle’s motorcycle shop. I have been there a couple of times on previous trips and found it to be one of the few “old school” Eurosport shops left in existence, resisting the relentless push of the “Powersports Center” concept. Unfortunately, I had not adequately considered that such a place might give its employees the holiday weekend off instead of staying open for wandering tourists and I found it closed.

In Atchison, KS, I found a spot for lunch at a little restaurant on the corner with a patio out back. They offered a splendid salad with fried chicken. The railroad runs beside the main street of this old town, presumably headed for Topeka and Sante Fe. After a bit of exploration around the streets, I went north, crossing into my last actual destination, Nebraska. There’s not a lot of change to take note of at the border, just more flat land, fields off into the far distance on either side of a road straighter than a 60’s teenager’s hair. No lean angle required for a turn, just the constant tilt into the ever-present wind. I started looking for a room at Falls City (the town, not the beer) and found that most places were sold out. I guess others had already tired of the wind and decided to stop for a while. Finally I found a vacancy at the Best Western in Nebraska City which turned out to be quite pleasant. When I walked in the lobby, there was an older couple sitting there talking with the young desk clerk. The male looked remarkably like Col. Sanders, so much so that I cannot imagine it was unintentional. His wife reminded me of Aunt Bea from the Andy Griffith show. The Colonel asked me if I was rid-

ing a motorcycle (the helmet in my hand may have given it away, if the outfit hadn't) and when I said "yes", he asked my age. When I told him 73, he replied, "you're doing very well!"

This is a nice old city, with wide streets and sturdy brick buildings, some with murals on the side depicting days past. The avenues are designated as "Corsos", (as in 1st Corso, 2nd Corso, etc.) Italian for street, though I don't know the connection. Like most small towns these days, many businesses on the main street are closed up. On significant trips, I try to find a Swiss Army Knife in a configuration I don't already have and then I engrave on the handle where I got it. That way I have a souvenir that is useful, doesn't need dusting and makes me recall and smile every time I use it. Here I went into a hardware store on Main Street to see if by chance they might have one. These days it is unusual to find a hardware store on the main street of a town and even more so to find one that still looks like a hardware store should look, so this one seemed promising.

Inside I met the owner/manager who turned out to be a collector of such things himself. He seemed to be pleasantly surprised to find that I had an interest in the devices also. He told me his story of getting one as a teenager, wearing it out finally in his adulthood and sending it to Victorinox to have it refurbished. They sent it back, saying the parts for his model were no longer available, but here's a new one for you to use as well. Though his store stock didn't have a Victorinox I needed, he had a Wenger Swiss Army Knife multi-tool, dusty in the showcase, with a very old price sticker on it, showing a number about half of what the current retail price might be. I suspect it had been neglected because it was too heavy and large to be a pocketknife and didn't have all the

gadgets that the modern multi tools offer. I took it and it now will live in a tankbag. Later at the motel, I used the very efficient saw blade to cut a cedar board in half to make a more useful addition to my centerstand height for lubing the chain.

Dawn comes with me waking up in a motel room in Nebraska, not really sure what day it is, with no clear idea of where I'm going next, what direction I will point the bike's wheel when I leave this parking lot. Turned out to be north, then east.

As I am strapping my duffle on the seat, I had a long conversation with a woman in the parking lot who was loading large bags of something into her car. I think she works for the hotel. She said she rides a Can-Am Spyder, her husband rides a Harley and she told me of all the places she wanted to go. As I was ready to pull out of the lot, she came over and said, smiling, "may the Lord bless your travels." At this age, I need all the help I can get!

I went back through town for another quick look at the Corsos and the nice brick homes lining them, all within easy walking distance of Main Street. Back in its heyday, I believe this would have been a nice place to live if one likes a lot of flat space between home and the horizon. It easily could have served as the perfect little town in the beginning scenes of a Hollywood movie, right before the monsters or the aliens appear. I put the sun to my right and the wind from my left, heading north for an hour or so, to a bridge over the Missouri River, crossing over into Iowa, with a lot of that state ahead of me. At this latitude, Iowa is flat, often punctuated by the smell of feedlots, with still the endless, relentless, battering wind. My path is on two lane roads, flat and curve less.

By 5, I'm at the Drury Inn in Carolville, Iowa, the town next to Iowa City where I once bought a motorcycle in the middle of a trip down the Great River Road. About 3-ish, I made the arrangement for this room and then set the address in the GPS with "avoid highways". The device then took me on a variety of back roads in central Iowa, ones that I never would have strung together as a route...I didn't even see most of these on the map I had on my tank bag. Fortunately, some of the paths took me down into small valleys where there was a blessed respite from the battering wind, at least for short times. By the time I arrived, I was almost too tired to do the necessities, chain lube and cover, to put the bike away.

Dinner is the Drury's "5:30 Kickback" that the hotel chain always offers, an excellent real-food buffet made by a chef (which one can tell because he has a white coat and a tall hat and nothing appears to have been recently thawed). Usually a rather laid-back, pleasant affair, this night for some reason it was much like feeding time at the zoo. Disheveled and exhausted, I'm sure the other guests thought I was one of the less desirable animals.

At first light, refreshed, I went for a walk in the newly renovated waterfront area between the hotel and the river. Everything looks brand new, the white concrete pavement uncracked and the tables out in front of the restaurants rust-free. There is a giant silver statue of a chicken prominently displayed, which requires a selfie. Only later do I learn that this statue, affectionately named "Betsy Blue" is the "famed Iowa Blue" chicken, the only breed considered native to Iowa. The breed is reputed to be a hybrid of chicken and pheasant, though that lineage is disputed, but known to be hardy, resistant to heat and cold

and "excellent hawk fighters". Well worthy of a giant silver statue, in my estimation.

From Coralville, I head south, back through Iowa City (the dealership, "Gina's BMW" where I traded my R100R for the F700GS is gone, now converted to a Power Sports Center in another town) and pick up the Great River Road in Muscatine. The smell of distilleries is prominent here, but not for my state's signature spirit of bourbon, rather they are converting corn to alcohol for gasoline additives. I prefer it in a glass rather than an aluminum float bowl, myself.

The Great River Road is actually more of a direction than a specific route, following the general path of the Mississippi but often far from its banks. Often, in this part, I can tell the water is near from the arrangement of the trees to my left and sometimes the rich, damp smell of the river, but seldom can I see it. The flood plain is obvious here, though, the broad, flat expanse that once got covered with water on a regular basis, leading to rich, easily farmed land.

At Burlington, Iowa, I went into the Port Authority visitors' center for Great River Road information and found the world's most helpful public servant. A tall, young-ish man, probably 30's (he had on a mask, a real rarity here, so I'm not sure of his actual age) who told me about his Triumph 1200 Thruxton and said he was a big fan of the GRR. He pulled up some info on his computer and showed me an app for my phone that would allow me to stay on track...mostly. He also told me about "Snake Alley", the world's crookedest street. That led to a discussion of other famous streets, like Lombard in SF and one he knew of that was even twistier than Lombard, but not nearly so scenic so no one hears about it. I told him about Baldwin St. in Dunedin NZ

and he looked it up on his computer, marveling at the sheer determination to put such a street in a place that none belonged.

After I left, with his directions, I went to Snake Alley and rode it twice (it's only one way, going down) . He told me that the German immigrants who built it, following the idea of switchbacks that let them ascend the Alps, laid the bricks in a slightly raised pattern so that horses could attain some purchase while pulling carriages to the top. Poor

feel the roughness of the paving and see the raised edges he described. Somewhat intimidating, knowing that if the bike tipped on the sharp curves, I didn't have the legs to stop it going over.

Nauvoo, Illinois, once the headquarters of the Mormon faith, showed up just about lunch time. The historic local hotel didn't serve that meal, and sent me across the street, where the Red Front restaurant, had a varied menu from its counter service and offered a shared table



Snake Alley,
Burlington, Iowa

horses! Later they found that the curves at the top often toppled the high carriages, so the alley was made one way going down. Still frightening for conveyances with such primitive brakes and I am sure no picnic for the horses. Going down it on the bike, I could

with two ladies. There was a bit of a kerfuffle when the server called out a name to bring an order and two people, one of them at my table, responded. They had to sort out who was the correct "Melanie" and who had ordered exactly what.

As I proceed south, I switch sides periodically when the opportunity arises, just to see what each offers. Down here the road is much closer to the water, sometimes only yards from the edge with numerous little grassy areas set up with picnic tables, one of which provides me an afternoon nap right by the river.

Near Alton, Illinois, I pull over at a small park, a cavern by the river, and run into Chad, a young-ish man on a Buell, who is taking his early-teen daughter for a memory making ride on this road. They started this morning from their home near St. Louis and probably will return there tomorrow. It's a good start.

There is a painting of a fearsome beast up on the high bluff above the cavern and I read the sign below which tells me that this area is the storied home of the Piasa, a giant bird that devoured men in the legends of the ancient Illi-

native Americans. Fortunately there is nothing in the legend that indicates the thing had a particular taste for motorcyclists.

I make a couple of passes through the downtown of Alton,

which is a tourist town, looking for a nice little place for lunch, but apparently I am right in that zone between when the restaurants have closed from the mid-day traffic and not yet opened for the evening. Ah, well, I don't want to fatten myself up for the Piasa bird anyway.

The last miles into Hannibal, MO are on a 4-lane, a long way from any river view on the Missouri side, so when I got to the town, I found a motel only a couple of blocks from the water.

Just after daylight, I walked through Hannibal, down by the river front before anything was open. Every storefront and shop here finds some way to be related to the Twain books, often tenuously including quotations from his writings on banners hung from the lamp posts on every block. Some houses bear signs telling me of their role in the early life of the Clemons family and those who would be-



Alton, Ill

come models for characters in Twain's stories. It reminds me of walking through Stratford-upon-Avon, where everything is somehow connected to William Shakespeare and I think of a time when young Willie, or young Sam Clemons, was running around the streets of their respective home towns, each a boy with too much intelligence and imagination to be an easy child to live with, and the neighbors of both who said often, "That boy will never amount to anything, he's in too much trouble all the time!" Now both towns depend upon their memories for a livelihood. Who is that little boy or girl in your or my town now?

Back at the motel, as I was uncovering my bike there was a guy doing the same with his Harley. He asked me about my New Zealand t-shirt. Seems he was there on a rented BMW F750 in 2018. "Really loved that bike", he said, extolling the virtues of its handling and light weight on the perfect back roads of NZ. But here he's still on a semi-chopper HD, about as different from that BMW as one could get, "chalk and cheese" as the Brits would say. He's a bit younger than me, just turned 70, so I guess he's got his preferences down by now.

After having endured a few motel "breakfasts", I wanted to ride for a while and then eat somewhere down the road as used to be my habit. Crossing the river to the Illinois side, I elected not to take the Interstate which was, inexplicably, the Great River Road path and instead took the tiny two lanes closer to the river. I found "the Hook" diner in Kinderhook, which turned out to be an excellent choice.

The food was excellent, exactly as I wanted it to be for a small town diner, but of course part of the fun is listening to the conversations. One can stop in such a place anywhere

in the rural parts of America and hear basically the same discussions. Here there were two tables of locals, on opposite sides of the room, one a group of old men (at least my age!) talking loudly enough for themselves to hear, meaning that everyone else was in on it as well. Referencing an absent member, "old Tom" who recently retired, one said, "You know a lot of folks couldn't get along with him, but I never had no problem". I guess that's the male equivalent of "bless his heart".

Around the table, the stories of local events get animated with the men having to top each other in turn, making it easy to see how "ginned up" such a group can get very quickly. From "he oughtn't to have done that" to "get a rope and storm the jail" in just a very few steps.

The local Sheriff came in to pick up some coffee to go, and got quizzed by three women at the other table about why he was on their street Thursday, "lights no siren". They each gave him a detailed description of how they walked out in the street to get a better view. He was diplomatic, giving them just enough information to allow him to exit without revealing anything they wanted to know about their neighbors. I noticed that the men's table suddenly grew quiet so that they could pick up the gossip as well.

From there, the Great River Road proceeds south in the same leisurely fashion as the river it shadows, meandering through small towns, across the wide flood plains and then through brief bits of forest. It is pleasant enough, but the heat and humidity are starting to take their toll. The road goes into four-lane mode near East St. Louis, becoming industrial with lots of trucks. There is a heavy mist in the air, the smell of chemicals and smoke. I stop at a Shell station for gas and some AC. The bath-

rooms are in the attached betting parlor, where men sit silently in front of screens, smoking cigarettes, drinking and placing wagers on horse races. To each their own, but I'd rather be riding.

By late in the day I'm at Cape Girardeau, MO, looking for a snack and more AC. I cruise through the town, drawn to the mural-decorated floodwall figuring that the restaurants would be down there. They are, but

I spend the night in nearby Jackson, MO and in the morning make my way east into the just-risen sun to get on the road in the cool morning hours. Backtracking down to the river, out to Route 3 and then up to 146. About an hour down the road I stopped for breakfast at a little roadside diner, The Vienna Diner in Vienna, Illinois, hoping that the sign which touted their pizza wasn't telling me all they had. It wasn't. This, like the Hook, was a real find, with a clean, smoke-free interior, friendly

waitress and readymade characters for the listening play that always appears in such places. The special was a cinnamon French toast and eggs and bacon extravaganza for which I gladly threw away any diet illusions. It was worth it.

146 is a nice road, not challenging in any way, but gently curving, tree lined for the most part and not heavily trafficked as it meanders through rolling hills, terminating at the Cave-in-Rock free ferry across the river into Kentucky.

I have made many, many ferry crossings in my travels, from 5 minute crossings on a flatboat to the Badger across Lake Michigan, in several countries and lots of US states. I am always impressed by the precision of the pilots who can judge the current so accurately and put that ramp right where it belongs, even if they have to "back it in" like a flat tracker, snapping the boat around perfectly at the end of the "slide". But today, the pilot on this one missed the dock completely and had to back up and take a second shot at it. I guess everybody is entitled to one miss.



many are closed, awaiting the later dinner crowd. In front of one spot I see two women in chairs, drinking and laughing, so I ask them if this place serves pie. It does, they tell me, and so I park and go in. It is a bar, attached to a restaurant and the barkeep tells me he can rustle up a cobbler for me, with ice cream if I am so inclined. I definitely am. While I'm scarfing down my cobbler at a high window seat, overlooking the floodwall, the two ladies come back in the bar for another drink.



Cape Girardeau, MO

Through it all, the DR 650 served admirably in a role it was not designed for. Of those remaining in my garage in this last portion of my motorcycling life, it was the right one for this trip. The XT 250, excellent for dual-sport runs of any length or difficulty, prefers to be on the tiny roads, the unpaved or poorly paved cow paths or constant curves like

By around 4PM, I was coming into Elizabethtown, hot and tired and knew that going on for two more hours, no matter how tempting, would be foolish. So here I am, in yet another Comfort Suites (how can a single room be a suite?) just back from a salad bar at Ruby Tuesday's only two hours from home. Not that many years ago I wouldn't have done this, but it is the right thing for now. The tired gets cumulative toward the end of a journey when "barn fever" takes hold and the ride becomes more about getting home than being a trip.

The important stats for this errand are: Eleven states visited, 3,200 miles covered in 13 days, 8 terrapins redirected from the traveled lanes, and far more pie eaten than any reasonable person should have consumed. The last two continental states have been checked off my list, leaving only Hawaii untrodden by my motorcycle wheels and it will have to remain that way. The juice just isn't worth the squeeze for me at this stage.

the Blue Ridge Parkway. The BMW G310GS, for all its many virtues, would not have been very happy with the headwinds that seemed constant, even while still getting battered from the side, in the prairie states. My R1200GS sidecar rig would have done everything easily, perhaps too easily to call it any sort of adventure, but it isn't the right machine for enjoying the real twisty roads at speed. The DR 650 just bulldogged its way through everything that came along, with that satisfying strong pull that only a big single cylinder machine can provide, steady, irresistible urging ahead, locomotive-like, tractor-like, a feeling that resonates with something primal inside. If it wasn't happy, it kept it to itself, a perfect travel companion for this adventure.

What's next? I don't know as I write this, but as the man on the cart in the Monty Python movie exclaimed, "I'm not dead yet!" I ride motorcycles because I must do so, and I travel for the same reason. It isn't over, it isn't done.



Clear & Beautiful
49° F

TIME FOR UK TO SEAT A NEW BOARD,
LET'S RALLY WITH DAVE AND RITA McCORD,
THE SKY IS BLUE AND THE SUN IS OUT,
WE'LL DINE ON BEANS AND SAUR KRAUT...?



Here's the group for today:

- *1). Boone & Lynn T. Sutherland
- *2). James Street
- *3). Dave and Rita McCord
- *4). Chester Martin
- *5). Joe Bark

"BEEMERS IN THE BLUEGRASS"
RALLY WEEKEND

Boone

POKER RUN

9/13/97

We met Dave & Rita McCord and Jane Street at "Old Cars" Chevron and rode the "Grape" to Frisch's for breakfast. Chester came as well as Joe Bark and after a good breakfast, we continued on to the Stillmeaten campground about eight miles north of Frankfort on US127. It was chilly ($\approx 50^{\circ}\text{F}$) but not unbearable and the Kally site was already busy with early morning activity. Dave and Rita are going to head on back to Richmond and Lynnt. and I am manning the Midway station on the Poker Run.

It is now 10:30 and a gorgeous day in the Bluegrass! We are set up on Railroad street and have a bench with beautiful pink and white petunias on either end. Actually there are two benches under a huge maple shade tree that is behind a white "Tom Sawyer" board fence. Activity is picking up in this historic and quaint spot as cars and trucks are slowly cruising by the shops. Poker run riders are starting to roll in now with several states (W.C, W.V, MD, MS) already represented.

Boone

Books available on loan

The following books are available on loan. Email me when you want to borrow one, and I will bring it to breakfast (or whatever other arrangements need to be made...I can deliver within reason) and I'll put your name beside it on my list.

I don't mind if people keep them a while (it takes me forever to read a book now....I keep falling asleep and then have to re-read the last 10 pages or so) but I don't want to give them away for good. At least not yet.

John Rice



- Bahnstormer*** By LJK Setwright
Streetwise By Malcolm Newell
The Bart Markel Story By Joe Scalzo
Mann of his Time By Ed Youngblood
Yesterday's Motorcycles By Karolevitz
The Scottish By Tommy Sandham
This Old Harley By Michael Dregni
Racer: the story of Gary Nixon By Joe Scalzo
All But My Life: Bio of Stirling Moss By Ken Purdy (OK, not a motorcycle book, but who doesn't like and respect Stirling Moss?)
Investment Biker By Jim Rogers
Obsessions Die Hard By Ed Culbertson
BMW Twins & Singles By Roy Bacon
Bitten by the Bullet By Steve Krzystyniak & Karen Goa
Cafe Racers of the 1960's By Mick Walker
More Proficient Motorcycling By David Hough
Tales of Triumph Motorcycles & the Meriden Factory:
By Hancox
Sport Riding Techniques By Nick Ienatasch
Total Control By Lee Parks
Smooth Riding By Reg Pridmore.
- A Twist of The Wrist (Vol 1 & 2)*** By Keith Code
Triumph Tiger 100 and Daytona By J. R. Nelson
This Old Harley (anthology) By Dregni
Side Glances By Peter Egan
Mondo Enduro By Austin Vince
Big Sid's Vincati By Matthew Bieberman
101 Road Tales By Clement Salvadori
Riding with Rilke By Ted Bishop
Legendary Motorcycles By Luigi Corbetta
Red Tape and White Knuckles By Lois Pryce
A Man Called Mike By Hilton (bio of Mike Hailwood)
The Perfect Vehicle By Melissa Pierson
One Man Caravan By Robert Fulton (first known circumnavigation of the world by motorcycle)
Monkey Butt By Rick Sieman
Ariel: The postwar models By Roy Bacon
Short Way Up By Steve Wilson
Endless Horizon By Dan Walsh
Leanings (1 & 2) By Peter Egan
Into the Heart of Africa By Jerry Smith
The Last Hurrah By Des Molloy
(Autographed copy, with DVD of the trip)
Whatever Happened to the British Motorcycle Industry
By Bert Hopwood
Down the Road By Steve Wilson
Motorcycling Excellence
By Motorcycle Safety Foundation
Leanings 3 By Peter Egan
Ghost Rider By Neal Peart
Revolutionary Ride By Lois Pryce
How to Drive a Sidecar Rig by David Hough

