

Two Bikes West



Dedicated to my parents, John and Mary
who let me spread my wings.

This book is a print version of the trip's blog: Two Bikes West.

Contents

Introduction: Two Bikes West	5
My original bike and its theft	6
Restoring the glory	7
The time machine atop my home	9
The word for the day is "GLIDE"	11
The 1965 Bicycle Trip: Cleveland to Los Angeles	12
What Did Your Parents Say?	23
Why We Did It	25
With a Little Help from My Friends	27
What I Learned from Mike	28
Remembering The Wild Man in the Wildcat	30
Welcome to Two Bikes West	31
My Goddaughter and Synchronicity	33
The Most Excellent Send-off Gift	36
Day One: Finally On the Road	37
Day Two: Returning the Favor	46
Day Three: Moving to the Mississippi	54
Day Four: West of the Mississippi	64
Day Five: Across Missouri	72
Day Six: New Faces	82
Day Seven: Tall Grass Prairie	92
Day Eight: Kinsley, Kansas	103
Day Nine: The Road to Dodge City	118
Day Ten: Wind and Karma	124

Day Eleven: Off the Pavement	130
Day Twelve: Driving East Hurts My Eyes	139
Day Thirteen: Squeezing Out the Last Drops	143
Day Fourteen: A Tale of Two City Tire Stores	149
Once We Got to Los Angeles	158
Final Thoughts: The Inner Journey	161

Introduction: Two Bikes West

Monday, February 02, 2015

In 1965 at age sixteen, my high school friend, Mike Roach, and I decided to ride 15 speed bicycles from Cleveland, Ohio to Los Angeles, California. We got as far as the town of Kinsley in the southwest corner of Kansas, about 100 miles east of Colorado. We tried to limit our expenses to \$1 a day by sleeping in small town jails and fire stations and other free lodgings along the way. We eventually made it to Los Angeles by hitch-hiking from Kinsley.

This year in September, my wife, Susan Lewis, and I are recreating the trip by driving my pick-up truck along the route noted in my original trip journal. We'll have our bikes in the truck bed for daily rides, side trips and sightseeing.

If Mike had lived beyond 1998 I'm sure he'd be up for making the trip. In some way, he'll be coming along too.

This blog will tell the story of our preparations and our daily adventures once we are on the road.

-Ed Neal

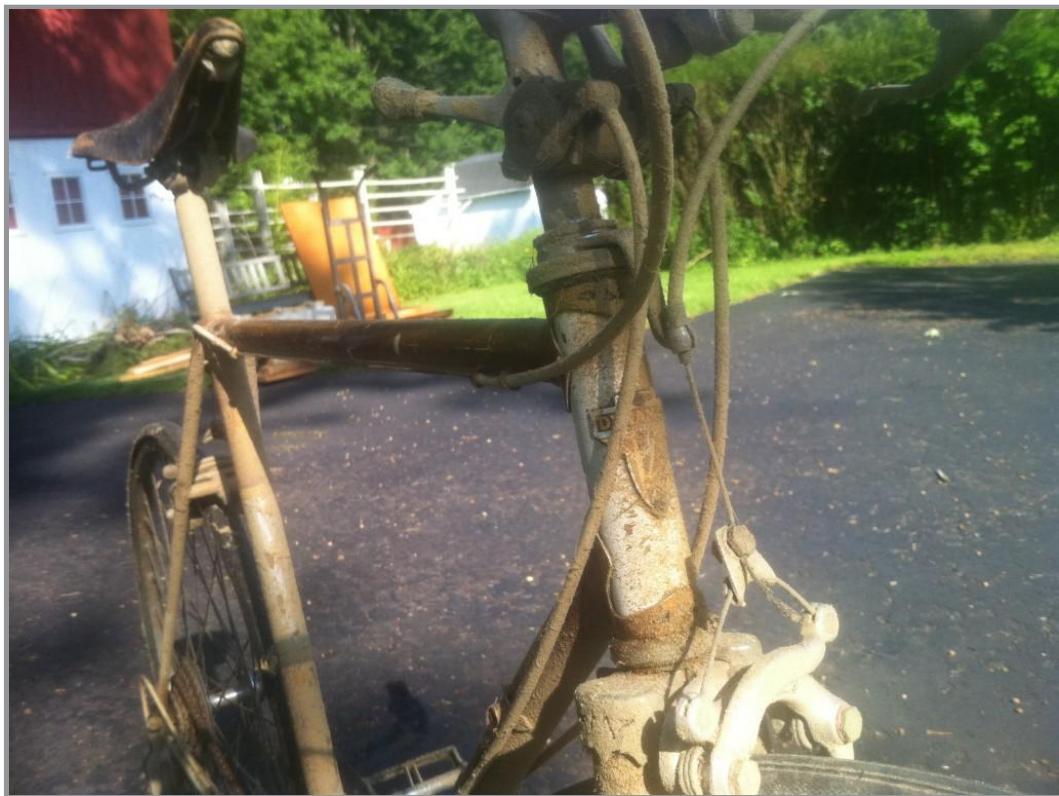
My original bike and its theft

Tuesday, February 03, 2015

In 1965 I worked week-ends at a carpet work room where roll carpeting and padding is cut to size. I made \$1.25 /hr. and saved enough to look for a ten-speed bike, an innovative model which had been in the USA market for only a few years. I paid \$75 for a fifteen speed Dynamax, a French-made bike in golden bronze and white paint tricked out with pedal straps, racing handle bars and a bracketed water bottle. I rode the bike home from Chris's Bike Shop on Lorain and W128th. It impressed me with its get-up-and go attitude.

When we ended our bike trip in Kinsley, Kansas in 1965 I shipped the bike home via Railway Express. Mike and I continued on and hitch-hiked to Los Angeles. I kept the bike over the years but it became modified and ill-maintained.

Around 1981, the Dynamax was stolen out of our garage in Ohio City. I thought that was the end of it. Two years later, a home up the street came up for sale and being curious about the real estate market, Sue and I went to check it out. The home had been cleared out but along a wall in the basement was my Dynamax. We were meant to be together.



For the past thirty years the bike has been stored in my barn loft accumulating a patina of neglect. In its present condition it is unridable. Rather than buy a new bike for the trip, I decided to have the bike restored to its original, prime condition.

Restoring the glory

Friday, March 13, 2015





A lot of love at Joy Machines

Meet Alex Nosse, the owner and proprietor of **Joy Machines**, a quirky bike shop on Cleveland's West 25th. Street West Side Market strip. Alex is going to restore my bike for the trip. Why Alex? Two reasons.

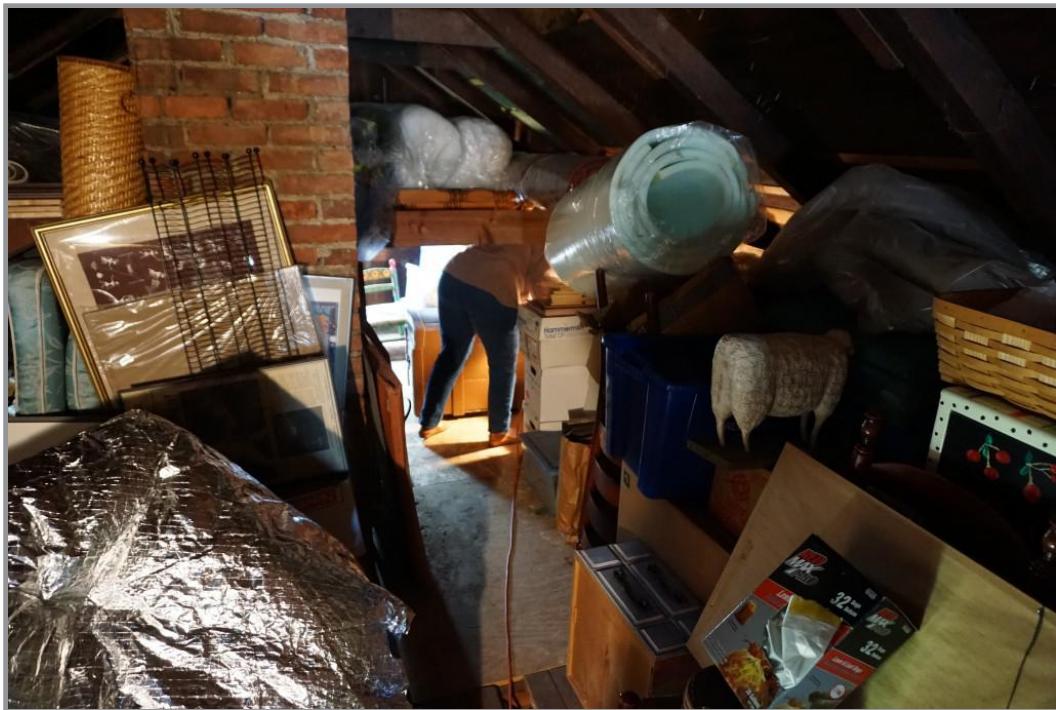
Reason 1: Years ago, when I was a twenty-something hanging out with a circle of friends at the Harbor Inn in the flats, I introduced a friend, Rich Nosse, to another friend, Mary Caldwell. Eventually they married and had three children: Maria, Alex and David. I feel somewhat responsible.

Reason 2: A few years back, Alex made a bicycle trip from Cleveland to San Francisco, covering over 3,000 miles in 59 days. He has first-hand advice on long-distance biking that is meaningful.

Together we looked over my decrepit bike. We discussed what needed to be replaced and what could be saved. Alex thought at least the frame was solid. He'll draft a to-do list and we'll come to an agreement. I felt I was in the right hands when he said, "I'll give it a lot of love."

The time machine atop my home

Sunday, June 21, 2015



Does your attic look like this? I thought so. But why would you want to find anything quickly in the attic? The fun is using the attic time machine for all its tangential discoveries.

I went looking for the small suitcase I used on my 1965 bike trip. It stored my clothes and shaving kit. It knew it was up there. I wanted to measure it and see what size my life fit into for six weeks in the summer of 1965. I want to limit my carry-on for this trip to the same size.

It took two trips up in the time machine (summer is not the time to use the time machine) but I found it, over in a spot directly opposite from where I was getting that "I-know-it's-right-here-somewhere" feeling.



So there it is, emblazoned with travel decals from the complete bike trip. Travel decals were quite popular in the 50's and 60's. Around our neighborhood, it seemed the family station wagon came back from the trip out west with a series of travel decals in the rear side windows. Since our family never went on vacations, I found the stickers to be exotic and inspiring of wanderlust.

My mother would have called this case a satchel, a sort of carry-on or overnighter in its day. It was already old when I got hold of it for the trip.

[gallery size="medium" columns="2" ids="61,58,53,52"]

If I tried to use it on the trip I feel I would destroy its patina and the graphics. It seems more like a centerpiece for a commemorative display. By the way, its 11.5" X 18" X 6", just enough to support a life.

The word for the day is "GLIDE"

Sunday, June 21, 2015

Alex Nosse, the owner of Joy Machines Bike Shop did a great job restoring my bike. He kept the frame and all the brake hardware but nearly everything else is new. It's now a twelve speed 2X6.

The bike seems effortless to get it up to speed and speed it does. It wants to run. It wants to go fast. And when I start to huff and puff and coast I feel its remarkable glide. It doesn't just coast, it glides. A small bit of pedal effort brings it back up to speed and I let go and I glide. There is a long run with a very gradual loss of speed. To me that is gliding. It makes me happy. Welcome back!



The 1965 Bicycle Trip: Cleveland to Los Angeles

Friday, August 07, 2015

Mike Roach and I started our trip on Friday, June 4, 1965, our first day of summer vacation following junior year of high school. We hoped to make 100 miles a day. Here briefly summarized from my trip journal is how our travels developed.

June 4 *Cleveland to Finley, OH.* Slept in a field behind a Marathon gas station.

June 5 *Finley, OH to Carthegena, OH* Overnighted at St. Charles Seminary where my aunt, a nun, Sister Anthony Spacek, was stationed.



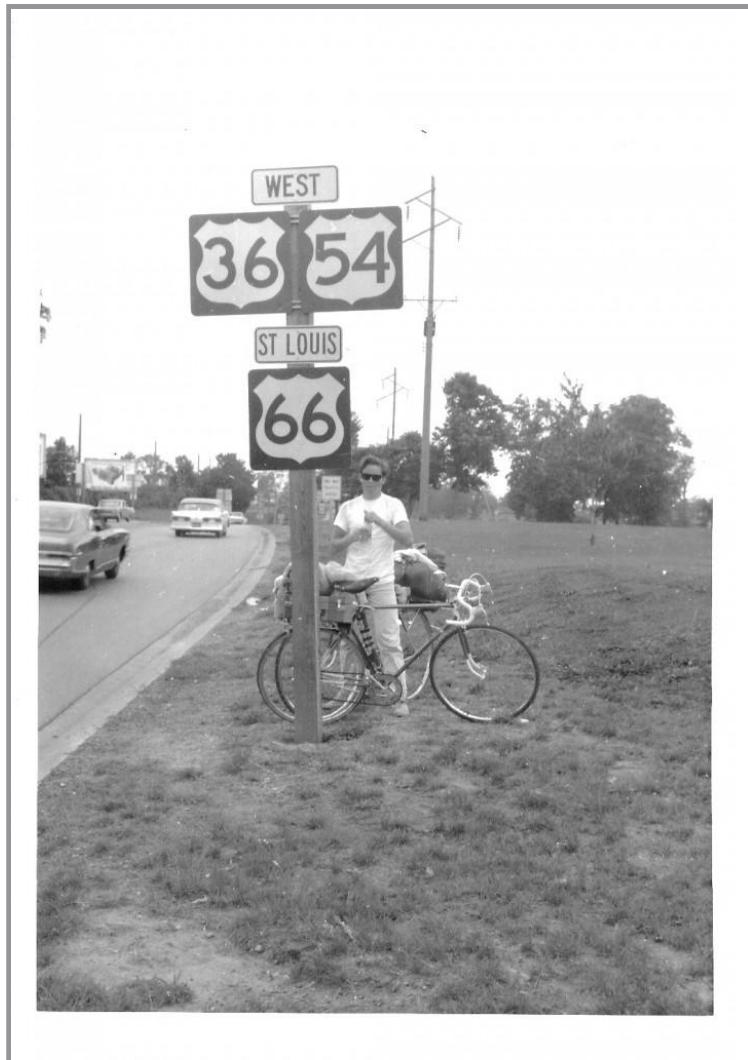
Mike Roach, Jake Herber, Sister Anthony as we prepared to leave St. Charles Seminary in Carthegena.

June 6 *Carthegena, OH* Visited the Seminary and farm and got to know an avid cyclist seminarian, Jake Herber.

June 7 *Carthegena, OH to Muncie, IN* Jake rode with us to the Indiana line. Overnighted at Muncie, Indiana Fire Station No. 6. The fireman called the newspaper and a reporter came out to interview us.

June 8 *Muncie, IN to Bainbridge, IN* A short article about us appeared in the Muncie Star. Stopped to see the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Stopped for the night in Bainbridge, IN. Asked the marshall, Gib O'Hair, if we could sleep in his jail. He offered to let us sleep at his home. He made breakfast for us in the morning.

June 9 Bainbridge, IN to Decatur, IL Stopped at St. Joseph's Jesuit Retreat House. The house rector at first refused our request. He didn't believe there was a St. Ignatius Jesuit High School in Cleveland. We ended up sleeping in the janitor's room in their gym.



Mike grabs a drink near Springfield, IL

June 10 Decatur, IL to Jacksonville, IL Asked to sleep at the fire station but they put us up in the police station jail next door. We were locked in at 10PM.

June 11 Jacksonville, IL to Hannibal, MO The night shift forgot to tell the day shift we were in the jail. It took a half-hour of banging on walls until someone finally came and let us out. Arrived in Hannibal in late afternoon. Asked to stay at the fire station and they sent us to the police station where we stayed in the jail. The desk sergeant called the radio station and a reporter interviewed us about our trip.



Hannibal, Missouri police station and jail

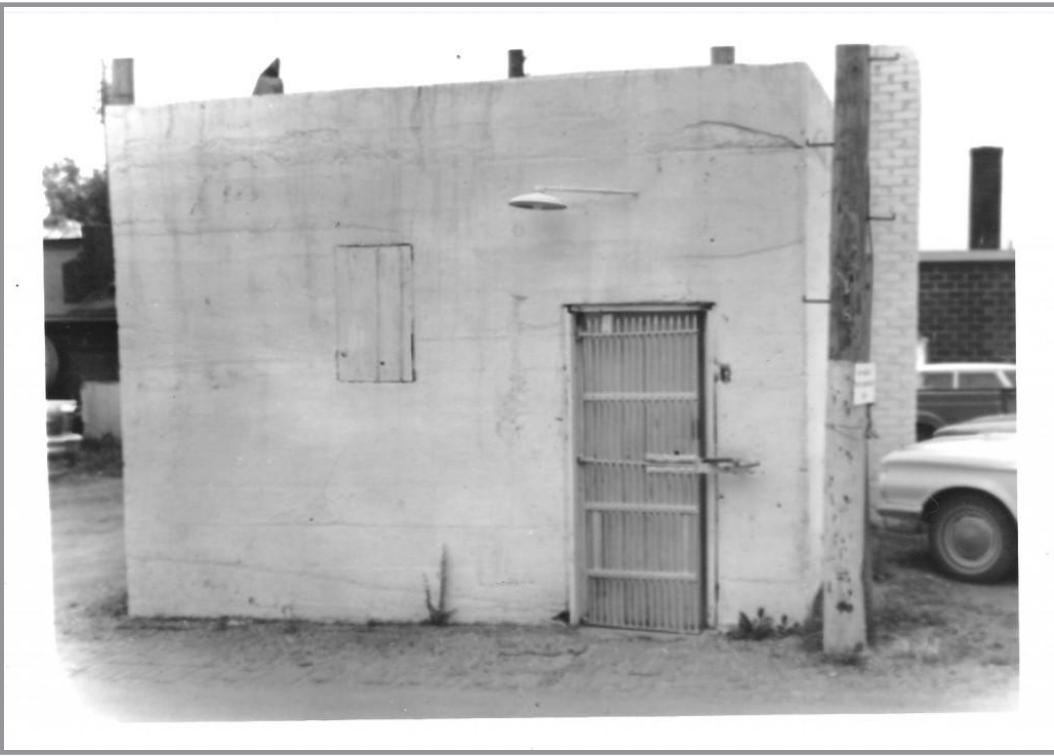
June 12*Hannibal, MO* Spent a wild night in the jail with a belligerent drunk thrown into our section. In another separate section, a prisoner kept yelling he was bleeding and didn't want to die in jail. We found out in the morning an inmate had tried to commit suicide by slashing his wrists with a broken fragment of an aspirin bottle he hid in the seam of a shirt pocket.

Took the day off to rest and explored the town, the birthplace of Mark Twain.



Ed at the Mark Twain memorial in Hannibal, Missouri

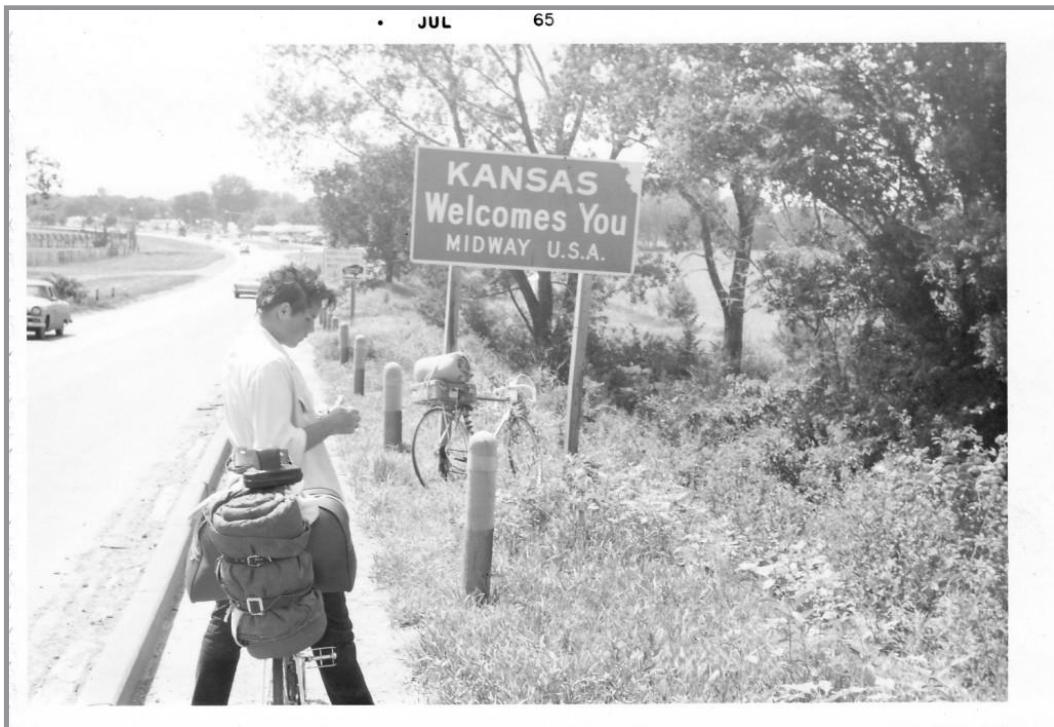
June 13 Hannibal, MO to Brookfield MO Asked at the combination fire station/police station/city hall/highway patrol office if we could stay in their jail. It was a free-standing small building, rusty, one window, and a pool of water on the floor. At first they agreed but then decided not to let us. Instead the officer asked at the Elliott Hotel if we could stay there free. We got a room for the night.



Brookfield, Missouri jail

June 14 Brookfield, MO to St. Joseph, MO Overnighted at the main fire station. The firemen were kind enough to take up a collection for us.

June 15 St. Joseph, MO to Hiawatha, KS In the morning, the driver of a parked car opened his door into Mike. He hit the door, flew over it and landed in the street but was uninjured. His front wheel bent and needed to be replaced. Fortunately at the time, we were following a policeman on a police tricycle who was directing us to the post office. He helped us get a quick insurance settlement which got the bike repaired for \$7.50 and a \$25 check to cover Mike's bruises and scratches.



Across the Missouri River into Kansas. We were becoming experienced cyclists.

The officer at the Hiawatha fire station/police station/city hall welcomed us to stay in their jail. One prisoner was in a cell serving a two week drunk and disorderly charge. The police left the door open, hoping he would escape. It was costing them too much to feed him. The prisoner, an Oklahoma oilman, made the jail very homey, put curtains on the barred windows, completely cleaned the place, and repaired the hot water heater so he could wash up comfortably. He slept not in the cell but in the corridor outside the cell where it was cooler. During the day he walked around outside, cleaning up the parking lot.



Occasionally, we got a ride. Here we found ourselves in the back of a recently emptied cattle hauling truck.

June 16 Hiawatha, KS to Osage City, KS At first the sheriff was suspicious we were runaways and thought to call our parents. We showed him our press clippings and he let us overnight at the jail.

June 17 Osage City, KS to McPherson, KS The police sergeant didn't want us to fill up his two cells. He recommended a flop house, the Travelers Hotel, where we got a room for \$2.



Another flat in flat Kansas. Here the winds blew strong out of the west directly into our faces.

June 18 McPherson, KS to Larned, KS At this point we were heading toward Dodge City, KS historically known as a wild cowboy town. To sleep in a jail there we thought would be cool. Dodge is on the banks of the Arkansas River and we learned the river was flooding. We began to pedal into steady headwinds over 15 mph. Overnighted at the Pawnee Rock County jail.

June 19 Larned, KS to Kinsley, KS We had to get up at 5 AM to vacate the jail since they were transferring prisoners in the morning and didn't want us around. We learned that Dodge City was flooded. We began to pedal into 20 - 30 mph head winds.

About 8 AM, a pick-up truck pulled over in front of us. A wheat farmer, Dean Carlson, asked us if we wanted a job for the day. He had a barn by the Arkansas River and expected it to get flooded. He needed to get 300 bales of hay on the barn floor up into the loft. We took the job and he agreed to help us get out of Kinsley before it got flooded.



Midway through heaving 300 bales of alfalfa hay into the barn loft.

We decided to end our bicycle journey in Kinsley and continue on by hitch-hiking. We had four good reasons:

- The road to Dodge City was closed due to flooding
- The 20 - 30 mph headwinds made progress very slow and psychologically browbeating
- We still didn't have a plan for getting across the mountains and desert
- We had Mr. Carlson's help to pack up our bikes for shipment.

I shipped my bike home via Railway Express. Mike shipped his to his aunt and uncle in Los Angeles where we planned to stay. We had met a LA truck driver along the way who promised to buy Mike's bike if he ever got to Los Angeles. Mike expected him to keep his word.

June 20Kinsley, KS to Stratford, TX Mr. Carlson drove us outside of town across the Arkansas River. We began hitch-hiking and through a series of rides got to Stratford, Texas. The sheriff, A.L. Doc Wilson, stopped us to check our ID. A storm came up and marooned us at a gas station. Later, the sheriff stopped at the station and offered us a cell at his jail for the night. How could we refuse?

June 21 Stratford, TX to Yucca, AZ Sheriff Wilson woke us at 7:30 AM and brought us breakfast of bacon and eggs. It was our first meal in a jail. He drove us out to a good hitch-hiking spot on the highway. We got a ride with three guys from Mason City, Iowa driving a '56 Chevy to LA. They were members of the Blue Dot gang and had a gang tattoo on their hands, a small blue dot with three radial lines located between their thumb and index finger. They had no money, claiming it was stolen from them when they went swimming. They were stealing food and gas. We slept in the car and rotated drivers as we drove through the night on Route 66.



Mike looks on as the Blue Dot Gang changes their last tire.

June 22 Yucca, AZ Near noon, we had a flat, the third flat since we met up with the gang and they were out of spare tires. We decided to leave them and began hitch-hiking. Hitched in 115 degree heat until 10 PM without a ride. Overnighted in our sleeping bags in the desert.



Hitch-hiking on Rt 66 in Yucca, Arizona; a God-forsaken land.

June 23 Yucca, AZ to Los Angeles, CA Awoke at 3 AM very cold and waited for sun-up at a truck stop. Hitched until noon in 120 degree heat without a ride. We learned there was a Greyhound bus to LA at 3 PM. We decided to take it. We had to flag it down to get it to stop. Arrived in LA at 10:30 PM and called Mike's aunt and uncle, the Quilligans, with whom we would be staying. Mrs. Quilligan drove downtown to pick us up. We made it.

What Did Your Parents Say?

Wednesday, August 19, 2015

Some memories reside as washes in a water color. They are present in a flowing, amorphous way. Other memories are sharp and bounded, frozen like the pop of a flash bulb.



Mike in the distance along a stretch in Kansas.

Let's start with my dad. The memory comes down to one moment at dinner the night before Mike and I left on our trip. My dad said, "Do you realize what a hair-brain thing you are doing?" The flash bulb went off and stuck with me to this day. He used hair-brain in a sentence, a word I never heard him say before. Or did he mean hare-brain, maybe one step up from bird-brain?

I was bummed. He was as discouraging as a number of my classmates were. They were all, as Edgar Guest said in a poem, 'prophesying failure one by one'. This sort of remark was not new to me so I could disregard it but it came at a sensitive time in the departure events.

My mother on the other hand was supportive and encouraging. My memory of her is more like a water color wash. She never spoke against the trip. I felt she wanted us to do something ambitious, something beyond the mundane. She let us do it ourselves. It would succeed or fail by our efforts and not those of our parents.

Eight weeks before the trip, Mike and I began to ride long stretches on the weekends. We took one 180 mile overnight trip to Mansfield, Ohio and back. Our parents saw us prepare. We left for LA under the deal that I had to write home everyday to keep them up on our travels.

When we left I imagine they thought we would be back home in three or four days, exhausted and chastened by the physical difficulty. But no, we discovered rather a timeless life lesson: simply putting one foot in front of the other, day by day, one can achieve great things.

Why We Did It

Wednesday, August 19, 2015

It was a dismal February day in 1965 in our St. Ignatius homeroom class. Mike sat in front of me. We were doing what the Mama's and the Papa's put into a song: California dreaming. Neither of us had been to California. At the time, music by the Beach Boys, Jan and Dean, the Safaris, Sonny and Cher, put this mythic land of endless summer, fast cars and suntanned girls squarely in front of us on a dinner plate. All we had to do was reach for it, or so it seemed on that winter's day.



St. Ignatius High School in Cleveland where Mike and I graduated in 1966.

Mike turned to me and suggested we go to California as soon as school ends. Neither of us had money for a car that could make the trip. He then suggested riding bikes. At first when we thought of bikes we thought of Schwinn's, heavy one-speed cruisers. But then we turned to the newest innovation currently sweeping cycling in the USA: the ten-speed touring bike. That was it! It was an affordable solution and in vogue within the current teenage culture and deemed a cool ride.

But there were bigger forces at work. Society was erupting and we were being carried into new territory. The conservatism and regimentation of the 50's was being challenged. A slogan we often repeated in our high school circle of friends was, "Protest against the rising tide of conformity."

The egg-shell began to crack on what was to emerge as the counter-culture. There were Cleveland poets we followed in coffee shops such as The Well who presented a more open and creative world. Some of our teachers encouraged us to think and act on issues such as integration, poverty, and the Vietnam War. Our good friend, Ray Dobbins, started a film club at Ignatius to expose us to some of the European cinematic masterpieces of the 50s and 60s. These films were so different from what we knew movies to be.

New, alternative voices in books, music and art called to us such as: Sr. Corita's collage artwork, *Travels with Charley* by John Steinbeck, *The Secular City* by Harvey Cox, d.a. levy, the Beatles, Bob Dylan, Phil Ochs, *West Side Story*, *The Magnificent Seven*, and many more influences.

It wasn't that the mainstream culture was so bad, it was just not enticing in anyway.

When I think of being sixteen, I think of the metaphor of a roller coaster. Childhood is the long pull up the first hill. At sixteen you are cresting the hill. You are able-bodied for the plunge into consequential life experiences. In our case, perched at the top there were two descending cultural tracks in very different directions. We took the road less traveled by.

With a Little Help from My Friends

Thursday, August 27, 2015

A debt of gratitude goes out to some wonderful people who helped make the re-cycle bicycle trip and blog possible.

Sue Lewis, my wife of forty years, who was game to head to Kansas... as long as there were no jail stays or camping involved.

Brian Hart, web designer and graphic artist, who helped me pull the blog together. He is one of the most encouraging and supportive people I know. He loved the idea from the start. He always produces something better than I expected.

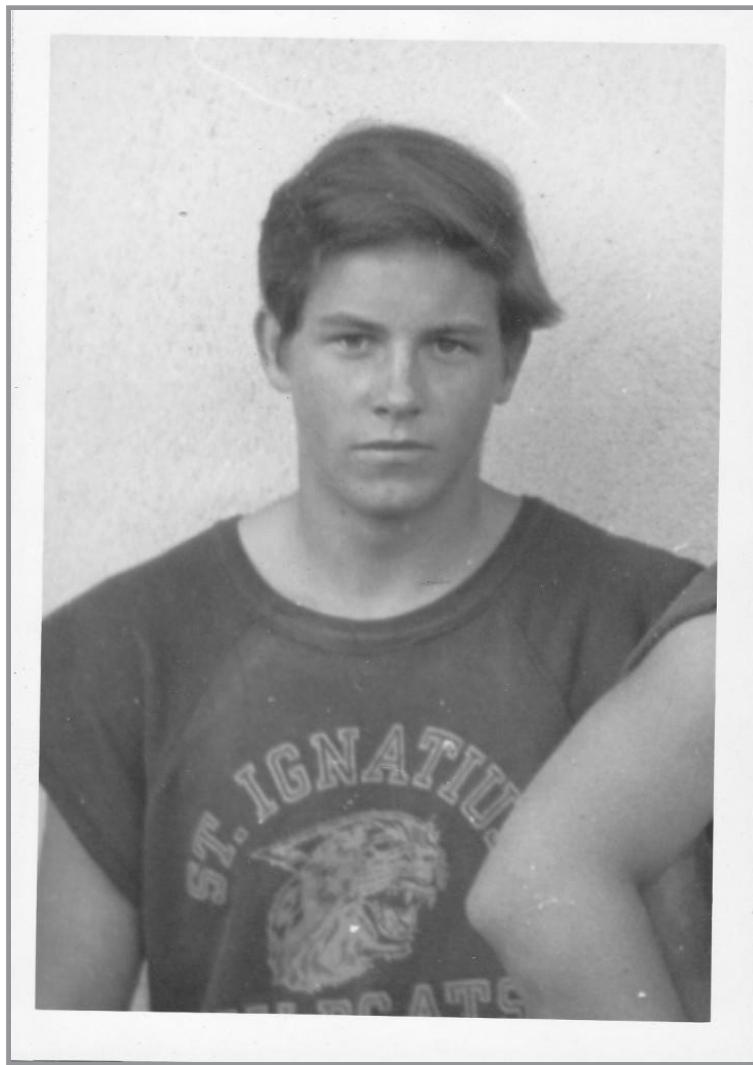
Adrienne Flave, my cousin and retired Dept. of Justice Inspector. Adrienne was very helpful in finding the relatives of people we met along the way fifty years ago. She came up with current addresses and contact information. Amazing!

Alex Nosse, proprietor of Joy Machines, loved the idea of the trip and did an excellent restoration job on the wreck I brought into his bike shop.

Jim Carlson, son of Dean Carlson, the wheat farmer who gave us the hay bale heaving job in 1965, More than two years ago, I tried to connect with the Carlson family and simply addressed the letter *Dean Carlson, Kinsley, KS*. Although Dean died in the 80s, the letter got to Dean's widow. She remembered us and passed the letter to her son, Jim, who called me back and enthusiastically welcomed our visit. Without such a remarkable destination to drive the trip forward, it probably would not have happened.

What I Learned from Mike

Thursday, August 27, 2015



Michael J. Roach, 1965

Mike and I developed different roles on the trip. I was very much the manager, the organizer, the scheduler, looking ahead to a destination and making a plan to get us there. Once we got there, Mike took over as the front man. He could talk to anyone, he charmed people, and he quickly got a friendly banter going. His manner made people comfortable and they responded with kindness. Being basically very shy myself, I found this ability amazing.

Mike was the first artist I knew. Although only seventeen, Mike was seriously aspiring to be a photographer. He brought along a Minolta single lens reflex camera on the trip and over a number of days he began to teach me to the basics of its operation. After the trip, he introduced me to the photo darkroom showing me how to print photos and make enlargements.

Nobody in my family or neighborhood was an artist. I grew up in a blue-collar world where aspiring to be an engineer was a lofty direction for a career. Nothing in our high school education spoke to a career in the arts. There were no art courses. Yet, I went on to make a career in video production. That life-long trajectory began on the bike trip with Mike and his camera.

I believe Mike introduced the idea of overnighting in fire stations. How he knew this was possible I don't know. My background was scouting and camping was the answer to the question of where to stay. We camped the first night with mixed success but sought out alternatives for the following days. After spending the whole day outdoors on the road biking through the elements, a roof for the evening and a place to wash up felt like white glove luxuries.

We passed through many small towns meeting policemen, firemen, gas station attendants, truck drivers, ice-cream stand clerks, waitresses, tradesmen, drunks, sheriffs, farmers. It was blue collar America that greeted us on the road. We learned the kindness of strangers and the goodness of people. Both Mike and I were of these people, we came from similar backgrounds, his mother a single parent, a super-market cashier, my dad a skilled-trades factory worker, and my mom, a home-maker and former secretary. When we returned to school for our senior year, an environment that promoted the white-collar world, we reinforced each other and much more confidently stood by our blue-collar roots. We were being educated to be professional people, to supersede our parents and we enjoyed the wider perspective of the world that viewpoint brought. Yet we knew, that wherever that professional social mobility would take us, it would not be at the expense of dissociating from our blue-collar roots.

Remembering The Wild Man in the Wildcat

Thursday, August 27, 2015

At St. Ignatius High School the sport's mascot is the wildcats. Mike definitely put the wild in the wildcat. In a one-on-one setting or among a few close friends he would be talkative and calm. But given a more public setting his wild side would come out. He'd do risky things, finding the outer edges of safety, pushing into territory where others pulled back.



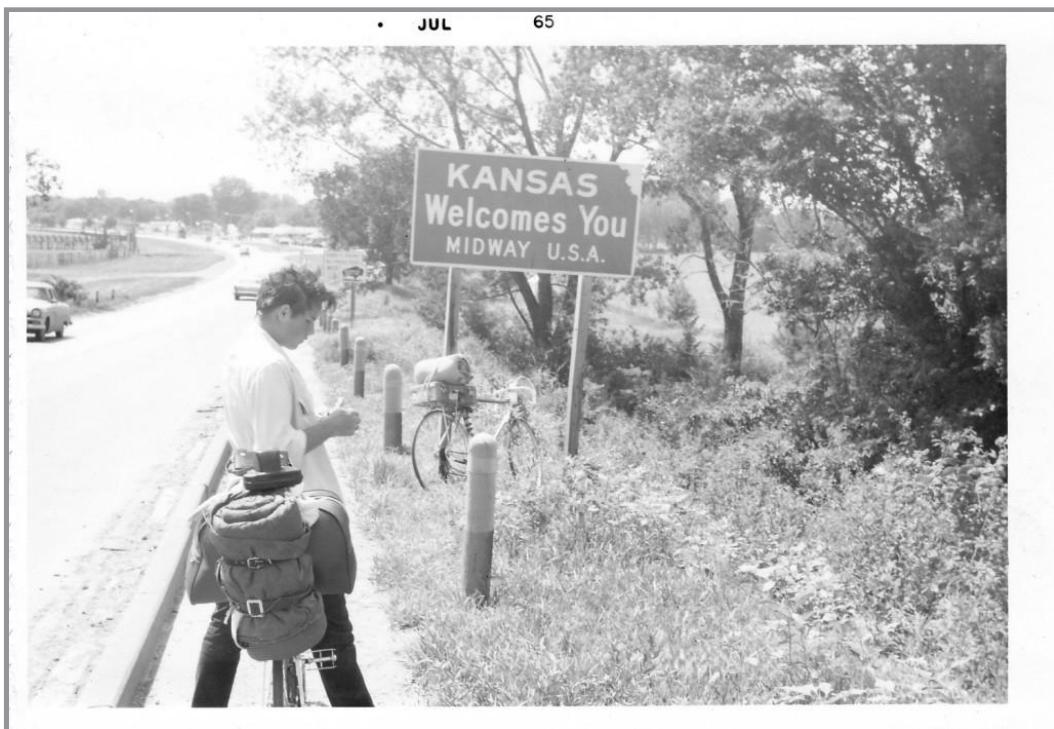
In Los Angeles we visited a classmate, Nick Dymond, whose family moved to Encino during our junior year. This picture taken at Nick's pool seems innocent enough but tells so much in hindsight. Mike is performing, he's doing a stunt comic dive. What it doesn't show is that Mike could not swim. He had no experience with a diving board before we got there. He quickly learned how to get a lot of air and land within an arm's reach of the ladder.

Here's another example from his later college days. College campuses were in upheaval during the late sixties. The civil rights movement pushed for equality and integration. Fraternities were falling out of favor and seen as tools of the establishment. Mike bridged these issues by being the first white guy to pledge the black fraternity at Ohio University. He was accepted as a brother.

Many told Mike he wouldn't live past thirty. He proved them wrong by making it to fifty. As the years added to one another, his behavior put him on a path that led to a back-to-the-earth lifestyle, building his own house through great struggle in rural southern Ohio. It also involved a lot of drinking, drugs, and marital strife. He died at fifty in 1998, cause of death unclear.

Welcome to Two Bikes West

Monday, August 31, 2015



In 1965 at age sixteen, I and my high school friend, Mike Roach, decided to ride 15 speed bicycles from Cleveland, Ohio to Los Angeles, California. We got as far as the town of Kinsley in the southwest corner of Kansas, about 100 miles east of Colorado and 50 miles north of Oklahoma. We tried to limit our expenses to \$1 a day by finding free lodgings along the way.

The trip proved to be a life-forming experience. In hindsight, it introduced me to attitudes and interests that have stuck with me over many years.

This year my wife, Susan Lewis, and I are recreating the trip by driving the route by pickup truck as noted in the journal I kept on my original trip. We'll have our bikes in the truck bed for side trips and sightseeing.



If Mike had lived beyond 1998 I'm sure he'd be up for making the trip. In some way, his spirit will be riding with us too.

This blog explores the 1965 bicycle trip and the preparations for its 2015 recycled version. Once we leave on September 5 the blog will feature day-by-day coverage as the trip unfolds.

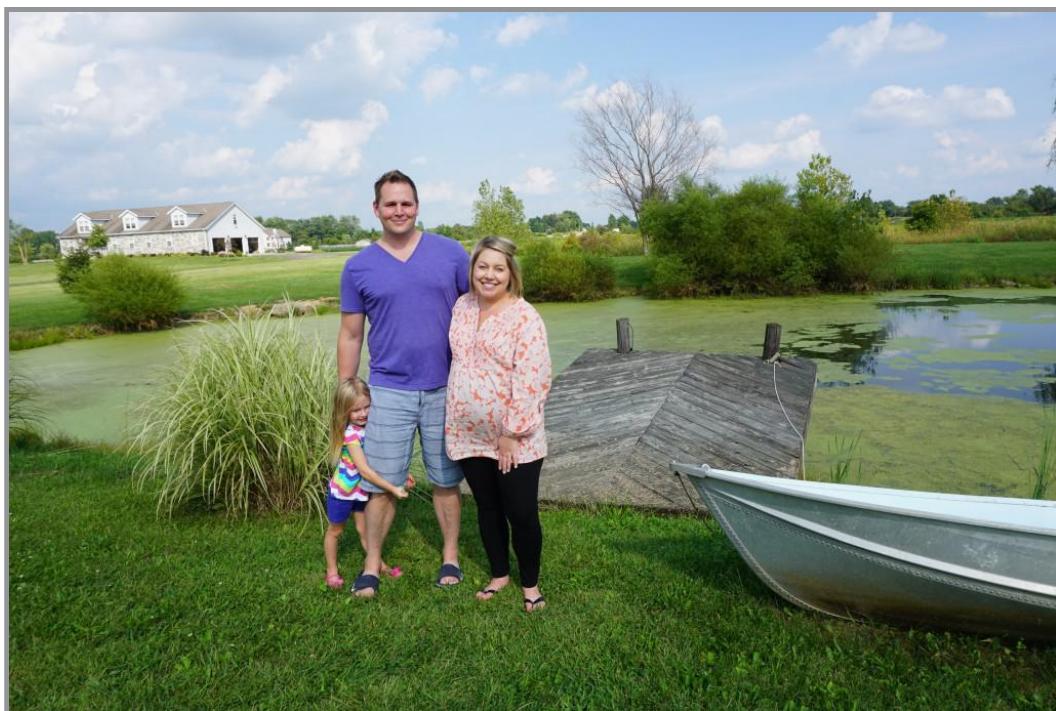
Look in the August Archive for *The 1965 Trip: Cleveland to Los Angeles*. It contains historical snapshots and short day-by-day descriptions of the trip.

My Goddaughter and Synchronicity

Thursday, September 03, 2015

I imagine many people saying, "This sounds like such a great trip, Ed. Are you doing it with Mike?" I have to tell them that Mike is deceased, passing away in 1998. Yet I didn't want the conversation to end there. I wanted to tell them about Mike's children and step-children. The Christmas card connection I had with them had lapsed many years ago.

Through my cousin Adrienne's investigative abilities I got the current address of Mike's daughter, Mary. I was her Godfather at her baptism. Through Facebook we re-connected and on Sunday we went to visit her. I drove down to Johnstown, Ohio with another close friend, Lou Brodnik, who was Godfather to Mike's son Nicholas.



Mary with her third child on the way poses with husband Kevin and four year-old daughter, Aveya behind their home. Ten-month old Kylin napped at the time.

I dug out old photos of her dad and brought them along to give our conversation a starting point. Mary and Kevin were very gracious welcoming almost perfect strangers into their home for an afternoon of talk and pizza.



Ed , Mary , Lou , Aveya.

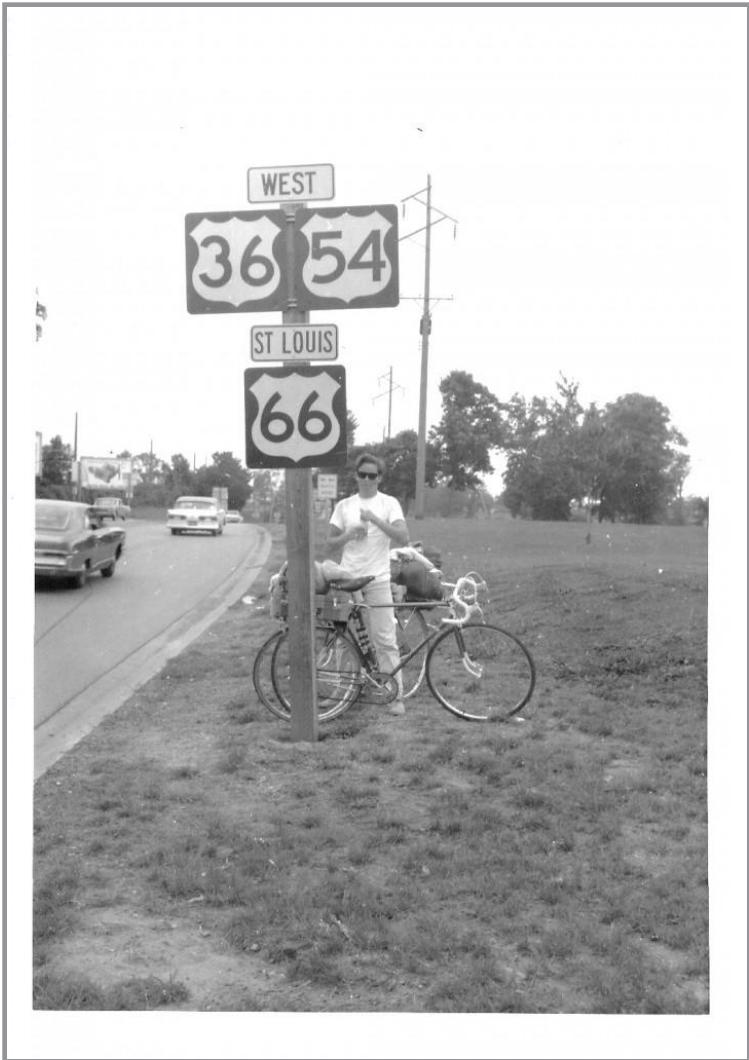
But here's where things veer into The Mystery. I felt that connecting with Mike's family is where our 2015 remake of the bicycle trip would start. Meeting them would bring out something that would connect Mike to our current adventure. And it did.

The psychologist, Karl Jung, defined Synchronicity as events that are "meaningful coincidences" occurring with no causal relationship, yet seem to be meaningfully related.

There was a startling synchronicity as we got within ten miles of Mary's home. On the 1965 trip, Mike and I followed US route 36 from Indianapolis to Hiawatha, Kansas. We spent probably 75% of the trip on this route. Planning for the trip this year, I used a yellow highlighter to note Route 36 across three different map books. I even found a 1926 reprint road atlas in my library and traced out what later became Rt 36 seeing it labeled, The Pike's Peak Highway, since it ran to Denver. In my mind, Rt 36 had a very special connection to our trip.

Less than ten miles from Mary's home we had to connect to her highway by driving for a few miles on Ohio Rt 37. At the intersection I saw this stretch of highway also labeled as US Route 36. WHAT? My jaw dropped.

A day later looking over the map I saw that US 36 continues from Indianapolis into Ohio where it seems to end about 50 miles west of Steubenville. But Mike had spoken to me, if only through my own sense of meaning.



1965 outside Springfield, IL. A road can be labeled many different things.

The Most Excellent Send-off Gift

Thursday, September 03, 2015

Alex Nosse, my bike restorer, warned me that the seat should be replaced. He said the ancient leather was likely to break and might split at the worst possible time. I agreed but the \$140 price tag for a new one made me pause. I was also unsure of the seat design thinking a more comfortable looking seat would be a better match to my aged butt.

Once I started riding again, I found the seat to be perfectly comfortable, so I looked for an exact used replacement on e-Bay. I found one but couldn't quite pull the trigger on it. I'll keep what I have.

If the seat broke, (most likely at the worst possible time: rain, nothing but corn fields on an unusually long stretch between towns) I'd have to live with the *I-knew-I should-have-gotten-a-new-seat* tapes playing on repeat in my head.



Original seat (top), replacement (bottom).

So how wonderful and synchronistic when a few days ago my longtime friend, Tom Wagner, asked if I needed a seat. He had an old leather one that he said I gave him many years ago. I don't remember anything about that but he stopped by today to drop it off. It is an exact match with very little wear. It is a Japanese Belt brand knock-off to the original British Wright brand seat design.

Now I'm covered. I'm bringing it along and if the original seat starts to split I'll swap it out. I can leave the *I-told-you-so* tape at home. Thank you, Tom!

Day One: Finally On the Road

Sunday, September 06, 2015

We left home and we are heading to Kansas but it feels like we heading across town on an errand. After two hours, we're starting to feel different. We are transitioning to that mental state called, On the Road.

Our goal for the day is Muncie, Indiana via Carthegena, Ohio. Our first stretch for the morning is focused on getting to Findlay, Ohio.



Octagon home in Monroeville, Ohio

We pass through acres and acres of corn and soybeans. The roads, mostly state highways are straight, flat, and have few cars. The farms are prosperous and quite tidy. Everything is mowed and attended too. Some have historical markers as century family farms.



Soybean fields near Tiffin, Ohio



Barn on a century old family farm.

We stopped at a picturesque farm near a side road and discover a small cemetery. The dates are old and many carvings reference lost children. The grounds are well cared for and flow from the road shoulder to the corn field without the interruption of a fence.



Small cemetery by the state highway.

By now I'm thinking, "I can't believe I rode a bicycle this far, I mean, this is starting to seem long even in the truck!"



Marathon gas station on the east side of Findlay, Ohio.

We reach the outskirts of Findlay and we start looking for the Marathon gas station where Mike and I spent the first night of the 1965 trip in sleeping bags in a field behind the station.

The station is now part of the 'Miracle Mile' and wedged between every imaginable franchise store known to modern man. I'm feeling like Rip Van Winkle waking up from a fifty year sleep and not recognizing anything.



Historic mansion in Findlay, Ohio

Leaving Findlay we come out of town on a historic 'Millionaires Row' of restored gems. Findlay is the home of the Marathon Oil Company and the wealth shows.

Our next destination is Carthegena, Ohio not much more than a crossroads amid vast corn and soybean fields but it is home to St. Charles Seminary. In 1965 we spent two days there visiting my aunt, Sister Anthony, a nun, stationed there. At the time it had a large community of men in religious studies, many of whom also participated in running the large farming operation that helped support the institution.



My aunt, Sister Anthony with seminarians working the farm. Note the Red Man chewing tobacco pouch on the bike. Yes, seminarians chewed tobacco, smoked, and drank beer.



St. Charles Seminary, Carthegena, Ohio



Today, St. Charles is still active but much smaller in its ambitions. It operates as a senior living facility and instructs about forty seminarians. The farm buildings still stand but appear to be non-operational.

I entered the main building but there were very few people around for such a large facility. I had an interesting conversation with an 79 year old resident, Jeanine, who was born in Poland, lived in Germany and came to Carthegena from Michigan. She told me to be sure to pray the rosary because, "it is very powerful prayer".



St. Charles Seminary chapel.

The beautiful light and quiet of the chapel put me into an altered state. There was a sensuality here that spoke of simplicity, purity, and lightness of being. I felt the envelopment of a supportive community yet no one was around. This space held a charge and I liked it.

Outside of Carthegena, I got the bike out. I pedaled 11 miles and rendezvoused with Susan in Fort Recovery near the Indiana line. No traffic and a paved shoulder on a flat highway made riding easy. On to Muncie.



So how are we supposed to generate electricity when even the cleanest forms are repulsed?



Muncie, Indiana Fire Station 1. The upstairs windows have been updated and a wing added on but the bones look the same.

We soon found our motel in Muncie, unpacked and headed into town to try to find the fire

station where Mike and I stayed in 1965. We drove through a grid of one-way downtown streets. Using some kind of homing pigeon intuition, I found it. The building is no longer an active station but currently a fire training facility.

I remember a few firemen looking over our bikes. They had never seen a touring bike and were agog about the long, sharply pointed seat. There were many comments in colorful language on how inhospitable it appeared to be to the male anatomy.

Time for bed, 300 miles in the record book.

Day Two: Returning the Favor

Sunday, September 06, 2015



World War II memorial on the Greencastle town square. it is a German V1 rocket, nicknamed a Buzz Bomb, used to terrorize England in 1944.

We left Muncie and 110 miles later after rounding the uncontrollable sprawl of Indianapolis we got to Greencastle, Indiana. Here we were to meet with Frank O'Hair. Frank is the son of the late Marshall Gib O'Hair of nearby Bainbridge, population 750.



Three images of Bainbridge, Indiana





Mike O'Hair, Frank O'Hair, Sue, Monta Gazvoda, Ed

One story from the 1965 trip I've told repeatedly is the story of the generosity of Marshall O'Hair. We asked the Marshall if we could sleep in his jail for the night. He sort of hemmed and hawed and told us to come back in a half-hour. He probably thought that would get rid of us but we came back. He said he didn't want us to sleep in the jail but instead we can sleep at his house in town. My journal said he made us breakfast in the

morning. He told us there was something about us that reminded him of his son who died about six weeks previously.

Through the efforts of Jason Hartman, the Bainbridge town clerk, and my cousin Adrienne, I was able to connect with Marshall O'Hair's sons, Frank and Mike, and Frank's daughter, Monta. I wanted to repay Marshall O'Hair's generosity and we met for lunch.



Marshall Gib O'Hair and his wife, Mildred.

Frank and Mike are wonderful witty storytellers and play off each other like Click and Clack, The Tappett Brothers on the *Car Talk* radio program. Frank told us a story about his dad. There was a time when he'd take off his work uniform after work and would come to dinner with no shirt on. His wife asked him to put a shirt on but he didn't do it. A few days later it happened again and Mildred again asked him to put a shirt on but nothing happened. She thought she'll put an end to this. The next time he came dinner without a shirt, she showed up shirtless without a bra on. He always wore a shirt from then on.



Covered bridge near Clinton Falls, Indiana

We followed Monta to her home in nearby covered bridge country, a converted one room school house built in the 1890's. She supports herself through jellies and preserves she home-cans and sells at farmer's markets and fairs. Her rhubarb jam took the Grand Champion ribbon at the Indiana State Fair one year.



The former school house



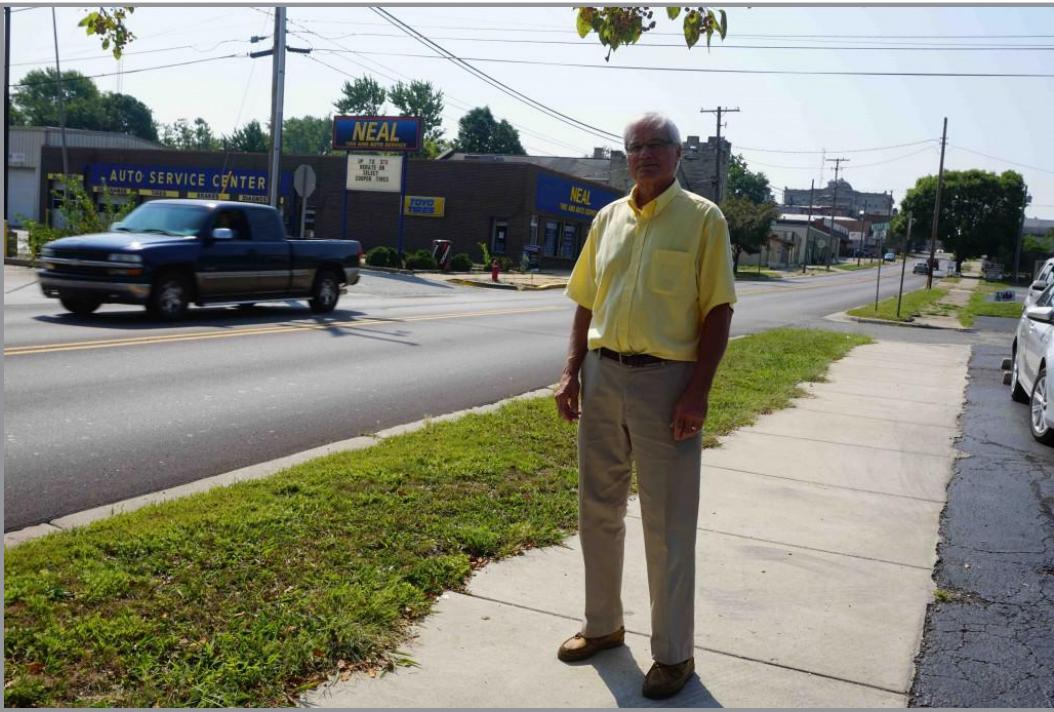
Monta's kitchen

We bought a supply of Monta's products and headed back to US 36 and west to Decatur, Illinois. On each side of the highway stretching to the horizon it was either corn or soybeans. We entered the Illinois prairie. It seemed like some one hit the landscape zoom button and put homes and towns further apart and filled the created space with more corn and more soybeans.



Soybean field

The synchronicity for the day: The restaurant where we met Frank, Mike, and Monta is across the street from the Neal Tire Service Center.



We passed through Decatur and pushed on to Springfield, Illinois for the night staying at the Route 66 Hotel. My nearly three year-old grandson Desmond would have liked the

car we saw in Decatur and would have endless questions as to why there was a chicken on that cool car.



Day Three: Moving to the Mississippi

Tuesday, September 08, 2015



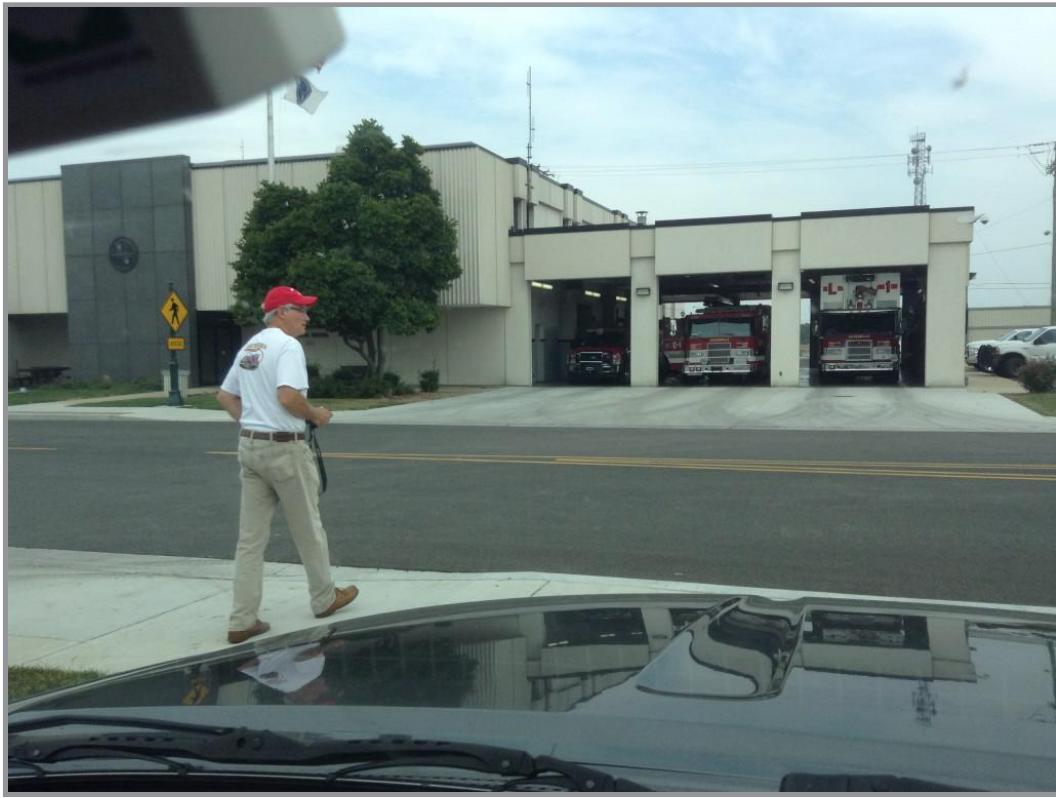
I asked Sue how she liked the room when we got to the Route 66 Hotel in Springfield. She said it was OK but at the bottom of her quality range (remember she agreed to the trip if there was no camping and no jail stays). One half of the building is actually the very first Holiday Inn in the USA. Now it's an attractive overnight spot for the biker crowd. The lobby has a number of artifacts and photos from the Route 66 era. My brother John would have loved it.

Off to Jacksonville, Illinois. In 1965, this town was the location of the first jail we stayed in. I reread my journal and now it all makes sense. In Jacksonville, as in many small towns we visited, the fire station was next door to the police station. We'd ask to stay at the fire station and they would often refer us to the police station and the jail, next door. That's how it went.



Downtown Jacksonville fire station 1965. The police station is next door under the star sign.

In Jacksonville, I inquired at a coffee shop and barber shop on the town square but no one knew where the old fire station was. I found the modern Detention Center building nearby and asked an older man cutting grass if he knew. He said it was torn down about forty years ago and a new one put up at the same location.



Current downtown Jacksonville fire station and police station.

The city council must have liked the bones of the old design: three engine bays, fire house, and police station to the left. The new building has the same layout.

The man said the city recently put \$1.5 million into the restoration of the court house. It reminded me of the clock tower in the movie *Back to the Future*.



Jacksonville court house

Keep in mind Jacksonville is home to the only ferris wheel manufacturer in the United States, The Eli Bridge Company. They also build the Scrambler.



We headed across the Illinois prairie toward Hannibal, Missouri on the Mississippi seeing thousands of acres of corn and soybeans along the way. Here, much of the standing corn

is dried out, lacking any green color, and seems withered by draught. However the soybeans are green so there must be moisture. Sue thinks it is all part of the life cycle of the plant and the farmers are letting the clock run on it until they are forced to harvest.



Soybeans in the foreground. The band of tan is withered corn.

The scale of farming here is like nothing I have seen. One can hardly call the cultivated areas fields. They are too big. They are a mono-culture vastness. God help us if soybeans or corn ever develop a fast spreading blight or fungus. We'd all be goners.

The equipment used to move the soil, plant seed, and harvest has grown to gargantuan size. The equipment looks like something used for strip mining in the 70's. We found a John Deere dealership along US 36 with some interesting hardware.



Corn harvester. A separate front-end unit for scooping up the corn stalks fits onto this machine. The tires are about six feet in diameter.



Gang mower capable of cutting a 36 ft. path. Each reel unit is 6 ft. long.



Hannibal, Missouri river front historic district.

We crossed the Mississippi and entered Hannibal, the boyhood home of Samuel Clemens also known as Mark Twain. It has a very pleasant and welcoming historic area. It is touristy but with a laid-back vibe. We found a Steampunk Festival going on. Steampunk is a sort of dress-up for time-travelers who draw their inspiration from the Victorian Era and accent it with artifacts of technology. A man might wear a black leather vest emblazoned with large silver buttons, a top hat, a holstered ray gun, and goggles a Victorian balloonist might have worn. A woman might wear a black leather laced corset, a dark green skirt, and a necklace made from a clockwork of brass and silver gears.



Steampunk goings-on.



Hannibal makes a living from its ties to Mark Twain. It celebrates one of America's best authors whose wit and humor still makes audiences laugh. His immortal classic *Huckleberry Finn*, inspired generations to 'light out for the territory'. Some took a bicycle.



Samuel Clemens boyhood home, 1965.



Samuel Clemens boyhood home, 2015.

The synchronicity for the Day: Entering the Steampunk Fair, Sue found the street performers using a table identical to one owned by her grandparents when she was growing up. They used it on the back porch of the house we live in.



Sue finds a table identical to one owned by her grandparents.

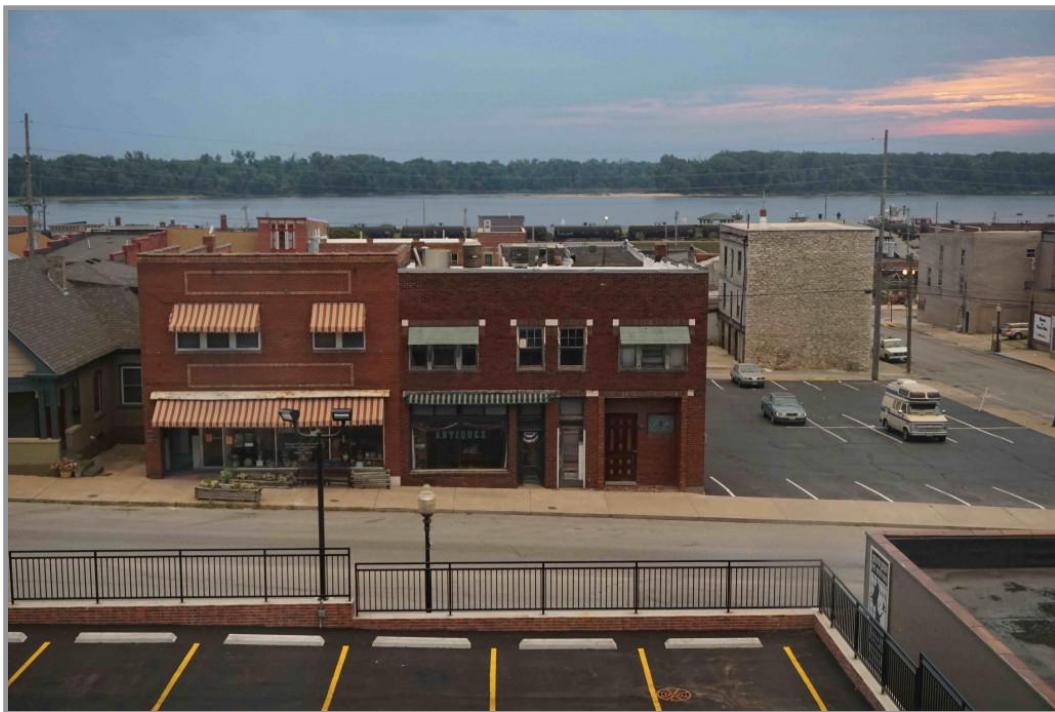
After dinner, we walked up the 269 stairs to the top of the bluff and the river lighthouse. That's it for today!



River lighthouse on the Hannibal bluff.

Day Four: West of the Mississippi

Tuesday, September 08, 2015



View from the hotel room, morning on the Mississippi.

Three noticeable changes occur once one is west of the Mississippi: (1.) People speak with more of a regional accent, (2.) the radio station call letters all begin with K rather than W and; (3.) Missouri is pronounced ma-ZUR-ah.

We spent the morning riding bikes through the town looking for the old police station where Mike and I spent two nights in 1965.



Hannibal police station, 1965.



Decaying, abandoned police station, 2015.

My journal entry states that we went to the fire station asking for a place to spend the night. They referred us next door to the police station. We got a cell and the desk sargent

called the radio station KHMO (still in downtown Hannibal today) and a reporter interviewed us about the trip. We heard the report later on the transistor radio we carried.



So what was it like to spend a night in jail? Let me quote from the journal.

We were rudely awakened about two in the morning when the police threw some guy into our part of the jail (there were two cell blocks). They actually threw him in and he was raving and cussing out the police. It happened that he was slightly drunk and that a policeman gave him thirteen parking tickets because that was the only way to get him in jail. Roach talked with him and gave him cigarettes but I was a little scared. So ...

We were awakened again when some guy kept crying out, "SARGENT!!!" and saying he got rolled and that he was bleeding and didn't want to die in jail. He complained all night. He finally shut up and we got to sleep.

We were awakened by loud shouting in the morning. Before we went to bed the desk sargent said that they had a prisoner in the other block who tried to commit suicide by slashing his wrist with a broken aspirin bottle. It happened that this morning he tried it again, this time by slashing his neck with some fragments of the glass he hid in his shirt pocket. The policemen were just taking him to the hospital when we got up.

By far, this was the most wild night we spent on the trip.

Just before the rain came today, we passed renovation work on an 1840's building. I asked the guys if they found anything in the walls. "Just an old Pepsi bottle with no paint on it. If it had a painted label, it'd be worth \$20."

Rain came in late morning so we rewalked the historic district with umbrellas.



Renovation of Mark Twain's father's law office.

Amid the rain, we took the Lollie the Trolley tour around town. We were the only customers aboard. The driver was kind enough to take our picture when we got to the Samuel Clemens statue in Riverview Park.



Samuel Clemens memorial, 2015



Samuel Clemens memorial, 1965

Late afternoon I took Sue's bike to the CoolBykes Shop on the miracle mile outside of town to repair a broken cable. The owner put new shifters on while his son did his homework.



CoolBykes in the Huck Finn Shopping Center on Route 61.

This evening we wound our way up a knobby hill to a lookout called Lover's Leap south of town. The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe freight train snaking through town in the distance was easily a half mile long.



Hannibal, Missouri from Lover's Leap.



The Mississippi River looking east to Illinois

One final comment for the day. The tour driver said that in the flood of 1993 the river flooded the plain in the above photo all the way to the thin blue band of hills in the distance. Yes, it's a Mighty, Mississippi.

Day Five: Across Missouri

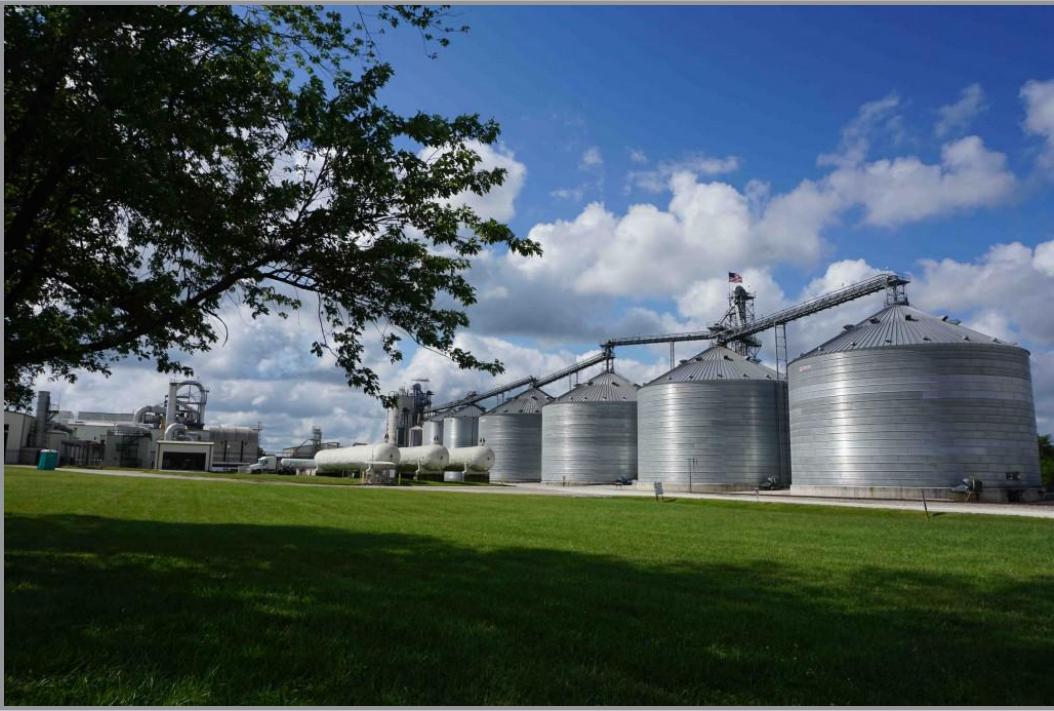
Thursday, September 10, 2015

The open road gets one to thinking. An idea arose from a quick historic homes tour of Hannibal we drove this morning.

Hannibal historic homes.



So I'm driving and wondering are there what I would call trans-chronic people? These would be people who do not feel comfortable in the present. They are from another time either past or future. These might be people who are historic home restorers, civil war re-enactors, steampunk enthusiasts, or as someone I know, a guy who drives a covered wagon with horses on week long excursions. You get the idea. Out here there is a lot of room for those folks.



Ethanol plant along US 36.

A lot of the corn we passed goes into making ethanol that is blended into gasoline. The scale of the plant is hard to determine until you see the tractor trailer in the distance. The big metal bins hold the corn.



Brookfield, Missouri antique store in a Skelly gas station. Skelly was still in business in these parts back in 1965.



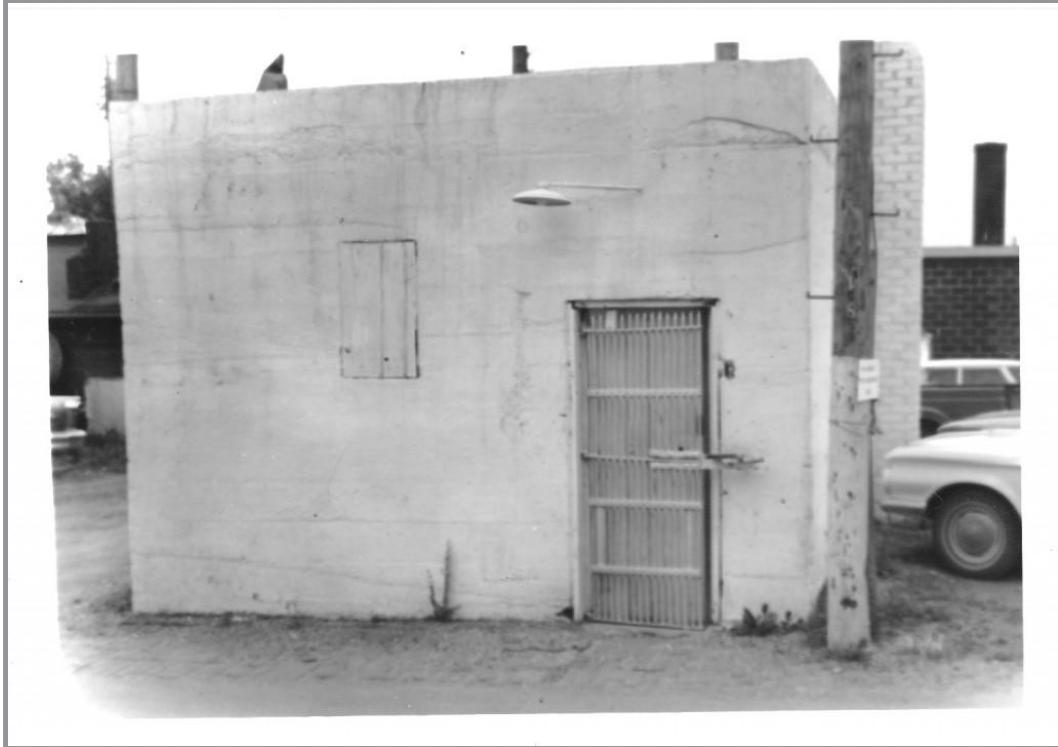
Brookfield, Missouri fire station / police station / city hall, 1965.

Our route for the day took us to Brookfield, Missouri about half-way across the northern tier of the state. We were looking for the combination fire station / police station / city hall from 1965. The current fire station didn't resemble the old one so I went into City Hall to ask some questions. They referred me to the police station dispatcher at the end of the hall.

Here we met Office Bob Garr. He told me the old fire station was renovated and a new stucco exterior put on to create the current city hall. A new fire station was built next door.



Brookfield City Hall. Sue is standing where the fire engine bays had been. The new fire station is the white addition behind her.



Brookfield, MO jail, 1965.

In 1965 we tried to stay at the fire station and they referred us to the police station next

door. They offered us the jail.

When I explained to Bob what brought us to Brookfield he gave us a tour of the current jail. The freestanding jail building of 1965 is gone but the city recycled the bars to create the current cells.



Officer Garr shows off the Brookfield jail.

Actually Mike and I never stayed in the Brookfield jail. The freestanding jail building was rundown and had a leaking ceiling. The police didn't want us to stay there so the officer on duty made a call to the Elliott Hotel and they gave us a room at no cost. The Elliott Hotel has since been torn down.



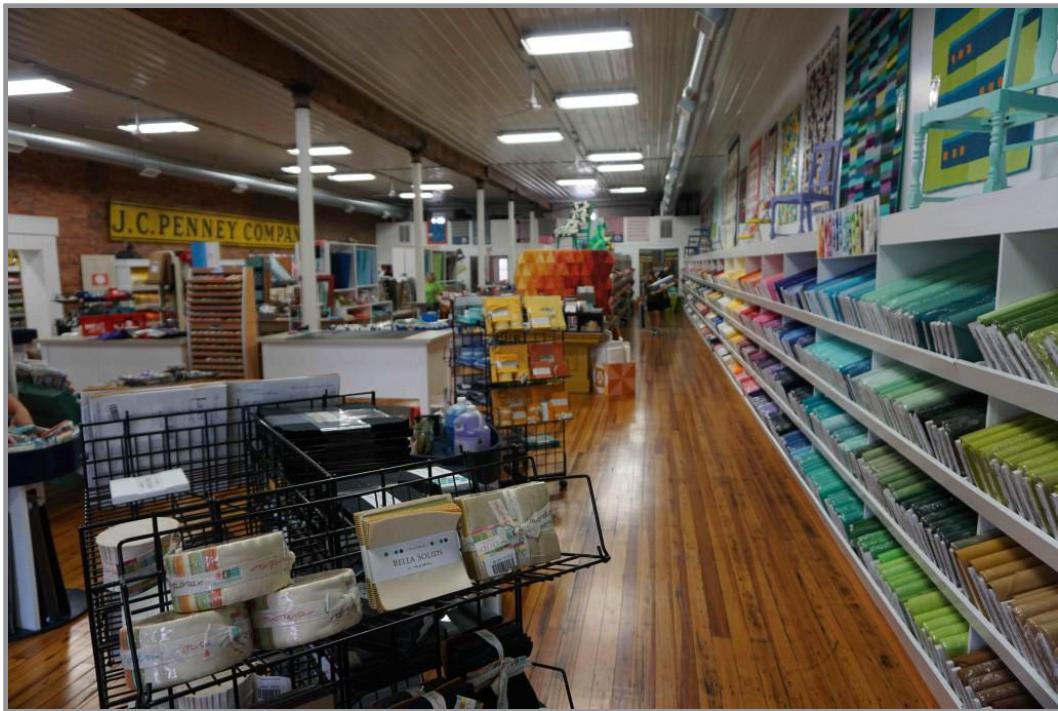
Coming out of the Elliott Hotel this is the grain elevator and rail yard we would have seen.

You may be thinking this trip has been too much Ed and not enough Sue. Well I haven't been dwelling on it but we've been making plenty of stops at fabric stores, quilt shops, and antique stores in search of buttons.



Sue and the owner of the Penney Mall antique shop in Hamilton, Mo.

Sue has her own cottage business of making winter cowls and selling them at farmers markets. She has a new wrap-around design for this year that is fastened with an ornamental button. So she is seeking out interesting buttons for her inventory. Conversations start and before long Sue is showing samples of her cowls on her iPad mini.



Missouri Star Quilt Company, Hamilton, Mo.

Hamilton (population 1,100) is home to the Missouri Star Quilting Company started in 2008. It has grown to be the largest USA supplier of precut fabrics for quilting. In Hamilton they occupy six renovated store fronts on Main Street each focused on specific quilting needs.

You may notice the J.C. Penney sign in the photo of this Missouri Star store focused on solid color fabrics. Hamilton is the birthplace of James Cash Penney and there is a small museum paying tribute to his life and the commercial enterprise he built into J.C. Penney.



The J.C. Penney Museum and town library, Hamilton, Mo.

We did get in a bike ride today. We rode about 8 miles into and around Brookfield. Here are two shots of beautiful things you only see traveling at bike speed.



Small farm outside Brookfield.



A cozy place in town, Brookfield.

We made it to the western border of Missouri and we're bedding down for the night at the Whiskey Mansion B&B in St. Joseph. The current owner has done an astounding restoration job on the place. Originally built by a whiskey distiller, it had degenerated into a boarding house over the years and was extensively destroyed by arson. The current owner bought the charred hulk in 1993 and has done a simply unbelievable restoration. Maybe he is one of those trans-chronic people. I'll have to ask at breakfast.



Whiskey Mansion B&B sitting room.



Our lovely room.

Day Six: New Faces

Friday, September 11, 2015



St. Joseph, MO 1965



St. Joseph, MO 2015

The Pony Express raced mail on a route that connected St. Joseph, Missouri to Sacramento, California. Started in 1860, It lasted only 18 months. The completion of the first continental telegraph line and the loss of a crucial government mail delivery contract led the company into bankruptcy. I can't speak for boys of today, but in my day growing up, the Pony Express loomed very large in our imaginations.

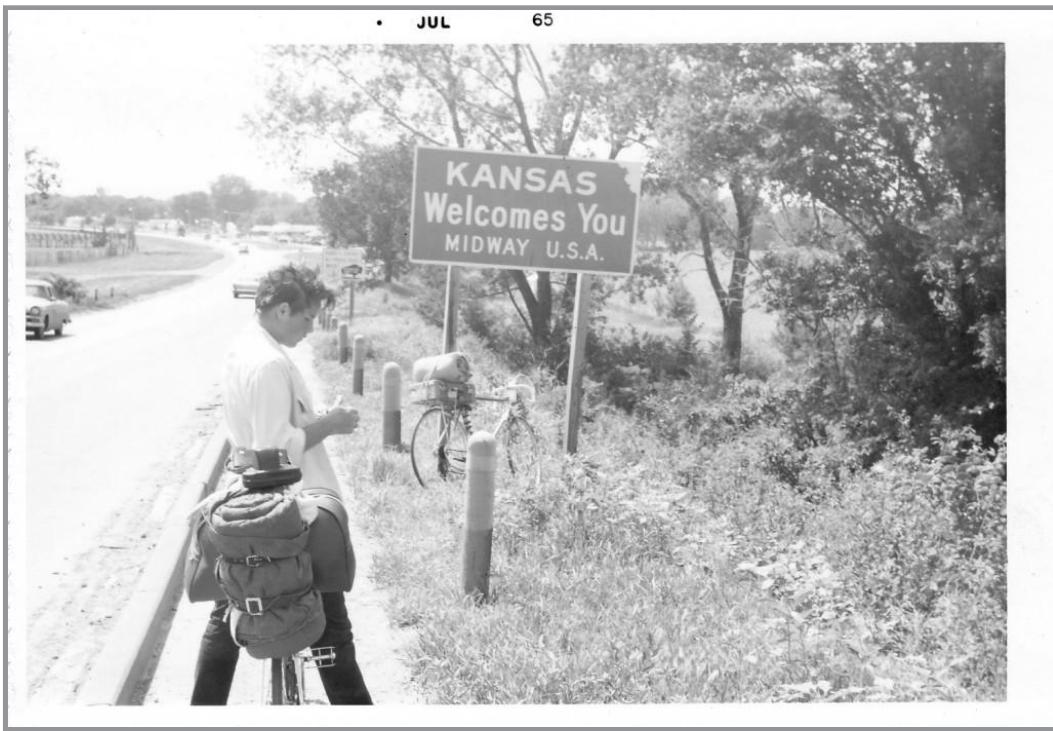
In 1965 we overnighted at the downtown St. Joe fire station. Today we tried to find it. I didn't have much hope knowing how much our overnight destinations in other towns had changed or been obliterated. We were actually driving to the on-ramp to get across the river to Kansas when I spotted it a block away.



St. Joseph downtown fire station.

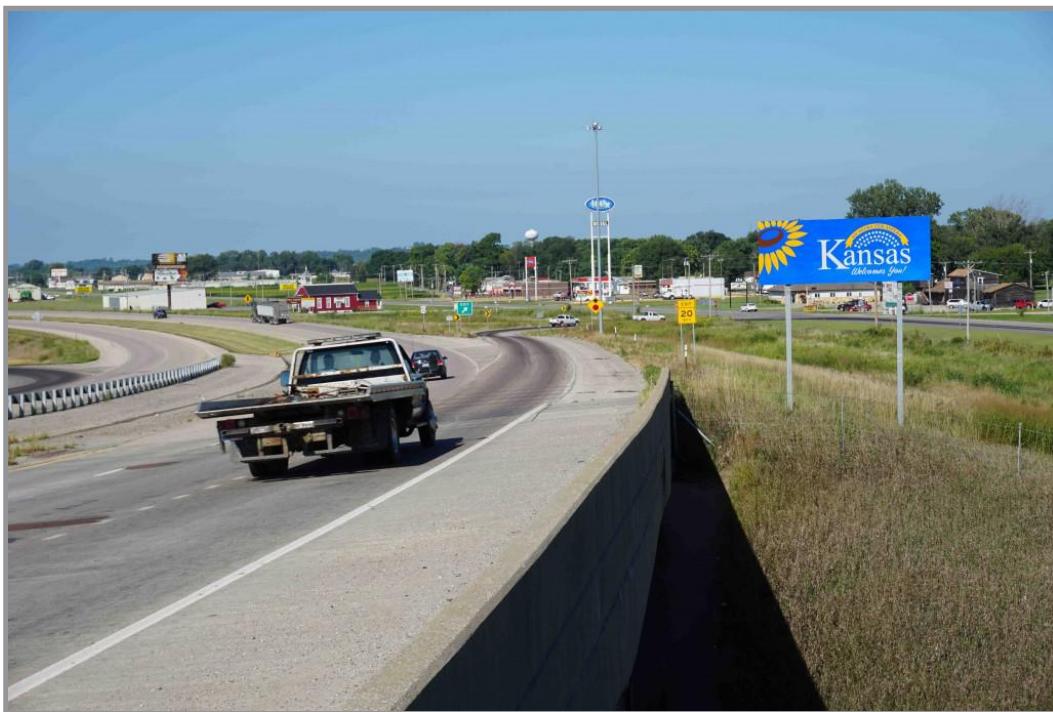
My journal states how wonderful the firemen were. They took up a collection for us, bought us food, and called the newspaper to get our story in the paper.

Coming down the firehouse stairs after talking with the clerk on-duty, I passed two firemen. One had a large forearm tattoo sporting the word Kinsley. I immediately thought: synchronicity! I asked him if he was from Kinsley, Kansas. He said no, it was the name of his daughter.



Kansas state line, 1965

For the past months I had been thinking about duplicating this photo, posing with my bike. Unfortunately, the current highway environment is all different, a snarl of overpasses and off-ramps. We pulled over to get a shot but it would have been a very dangerous process posing a shot so we pulled the plug on that idea.



Comparing the two photos it is curious how the sign's phrase, *Welcomes You*, has grown smaller with time.



Hiawatha, Kansas City Hall

Hiawatha, Kansas is near the Kickapoo and Sac and Fox Indian reservations. In 1965, looking for a place to stay, we were referred by the firemen to the police jail next door. Today, the fire station is a Chinese restaurant but the two bay arches are still visible. The police station and jail we knew have been torn down.



The repurposed old fire station, Hiawatha.

In the jail, we met one of the most interesting characters on the trip. Here is the journal entry:

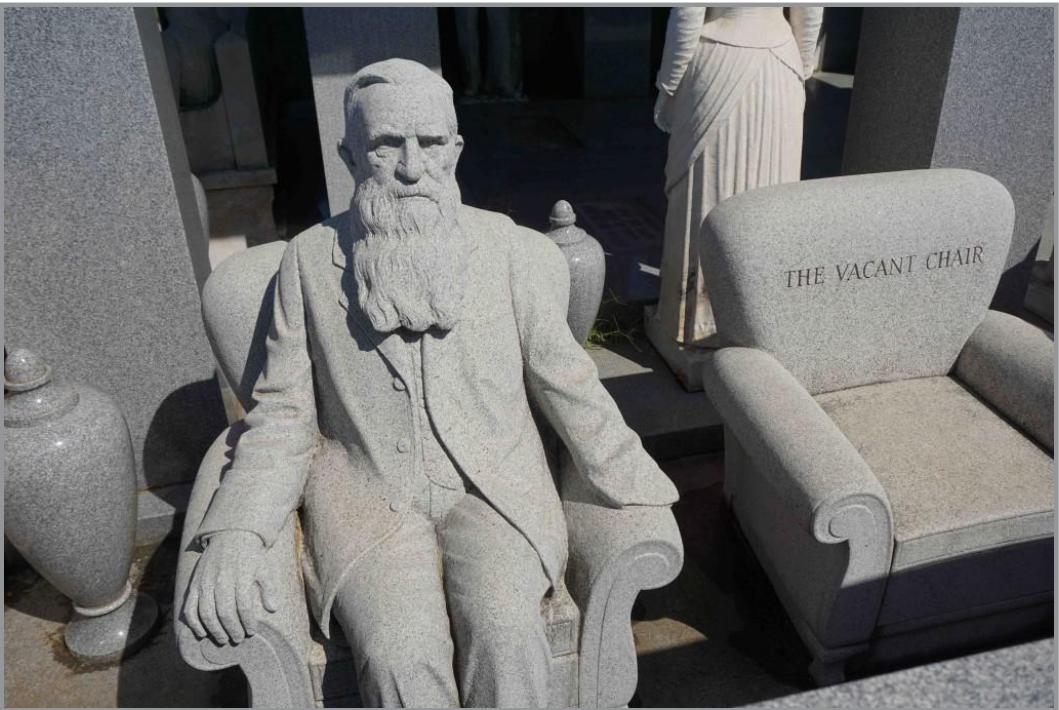
We shacked up in the jail with a man in there on a drunk charge. The officer told us he leaves the door open hoping the guy would escape because it was costing them too much to feed him. The prisoner was a remarkable man. He made the jail into a home, he put curtains on the barred windows, completely cleaned and washed the place, and even got the hot water heater to work so he could wash up. He didn't sleep in the cell but in the corridor surrounding the cell which was cooler. The office told us that he walks around the outside in the afternoon cleaning up the parking lot.

He was quite a character. He worked all over the midwest calling Oklahoma his home. He was an oil man and was in town looking for any job he could get when he got into a bar and just had a little too much. He was in for two weeks and had about two days to go. We talked for about an hour before going to sleep.

Hiawatha is also the site of the Davis Memorial. When John Davis' wife Sarah died in 1930, he commissioned life size statues to commemorate stages in their lives together.



Davis Memorial



John Davis lost a hand in a farming accident.



In younger and happier times.

On to Osage City where in 1965, the sheriff almost put in a long distance call to our parents to check if we were runaways. The St. Joe and Muncie newspaper clippings we showed him about the trip convinced him otherwise.



Osage City , City Hall, 1965

I hoped the Osage City Hall /Police Station/Fire Station would be intact. It is a cute building. It so aptly fits a small town.

We wandered around town trying to use the old water tower in the photo as a landmark. Some how the homing pigeon intuition took over and we found it. But it was so different.



Osage City, City Hall, 2015.

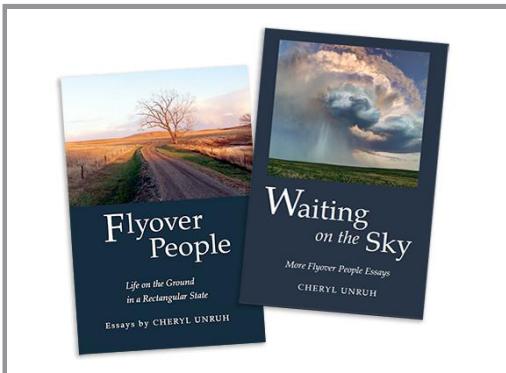
The bell tower is gone, the building has been refaced, and the water tower torn down. Time marches on, it may be practical but it's not always pretty.

We veered off the bicycle route to drop down to Emporia where we planned to meet author, Cheryl Unruh, for coffee. Cheryl wrote a weekly column for the *Emporia Gazette* newspaper. Her essays have been collected into two books, *Flyover People: Life on the Ground in a Rectangular State*, and *Waiting on the Sky*. Doing on-line research for the trip I came across her wonderful work describing the Kansas landscape and Kansas rural culture. She grew up in Pawnee Rock about 60 miles from Kinsley so I wanted to read her book before the trip. When I placed the on-line order, she fulfilled the request. We traded some e-mails, one thing led to another and we set up a get-together.



Cheryl points out some interesting sites west of Emporia.

We had a great visit. Before we said good-bye Cheryl told Sue of a good source for buttons down the street. When we got back to the truck, we found Cheryl left us a copy of her book, *Waiting on the Sky*, in a bag hanging from the driver's mirror. What an great surprise, thank you!



You can order Cheryl's books on-line at <http://www.quincypress.com/> The books are a collection of her newspaper articles so every two pages you are introduced to a new topic. It's an easy way to get a wonderful, contemporary window into rural Kansas life.

We walked from the coffee house on Commercial Street where we met. Nearly all the storefronts were filled and a sense of vitality filled the air. This was unlike many small towns we saw. We got to the button store five minutes before closing time but the two ladies said they would wait and stay open. The owner sells a lot through Etsy and has been on it for fifteen years. She's also all over Pinterest. She's down on eBay though, too many bad experiences.



Sue working the mother lode of buttons, racing against closing time. Like no other shop, Ellie Lou's Thrift Emporium had a very large inventory.



Emporia, Kansas

The sky began building as the sun entered it's setting stages. As darkness fell, the winds picked up and lightening began probing the earth. We're in for a storm tonight.

Day Seven: Tall Grass Prairie

Saturday, September 12, 2015

Cottonwood Falls (population 907) is the county seat of Chase county. The courthouse is the oldest continuously active courthouse west of the Mississippi.



Cottonwood Falls Chase County courthouse.



Cottonwood Falls in busier times.



Chase County courthouse interior. Walnut staircase.

We walked the three blocks of main street. Sue quickly found the Fiber Factory run by Charlie Klamm and his wife, Carol. They grew up in Cottonwood Falls, moved to Topeka, had their house destroyed by the 1966 tornado (they saved the basement he quipped),

rebuilt, raised a family, and retired back to Cottonwood Falls.

They produce tightly woven beautiful blue placemats in a color palette that is very familiar. They recycle jeans, cutting the front and back of the pant leg into strips and weaving the strips into placemats on historic looms Charlie rebuilt.



Charlie Klamm in his cutting room.

When asked where does he get used jeans, he said that they put the word out to the community that they would be recycling jeans in their operation and they have had a continuous supply since.



Carol at the loom with their pet cockatoo.

Charlie worked as a forensic photographer. He often replaced cameras in order to keep up with the latest technology but saw no reason to dispose of the old camera. He has quite a collection he keeps in the store. Roach would have been all over the display had we seen something like this in 1965.



Used cameras displayed in the case and shelved on the wall.

Up the street a t-shirt in the window caught our eye. It featured a red star and the words, Democratic People's Republic of Kansas. Well how could you go by without finding out more.



Democratic People's Republic of Kansas

The storefront is the office of Green Dot Holdings, a company producing biodegradable plastics. Their materials are primary made from corn starch and will biodegrade in about nine months.



We spoke with Kevin Ireland, Communications Director, who said they are quite upset with the Kansas governor who recently pulled the plug on state grants for biodegradable technology research and promotion. They felt taken. They felt like they were led to believe one thing but then dumped in order to favor the agenda of huge agri-business interests. They felt like they were living under a North Korean-like regime and they produced the t-shirts to express their outrage and advance their view. I will wear mine with pride.

Near to Cottonwood Falls are the Flint Hills and the Tall Grass Prairie National Preserve. The Flint Hills were too rocky for farming but excellent for grazing cattle. Tall grass prairie once covered 170 million acres of North America. Only about 4% is left, most in this preserve.



Flint Hills Tall Grass Prairie. One room school house in the distance.

To see the wind ripple the grass along a distant hillside is a thing of beauty. Gentle rolling hills blend into each other to the horizon. Cattle are trucked in from Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas to graze on this range. Nothing fattens up cattle like the natural Bluestem Grass of the prairie.



Flint Hills Tall Grass Prairie.



Tall Grass Prairie Preserve. One room school house closed in 1930. Last class had three pupils.

The historical plaque stated the school taught reading, writing, arithmetic, and geography. I definitely liked the focus on geography.

At this point in the day we were running late. We set out for McPherson. In 1965, we avoided the fire station shuffle and went directly to the police station. The desk sargent was about to call a hotel to put us up for the night for free when he spotted a twenty when Roach opened his wallet. The free offer was taken off the table and instead he called in a reservation for us at a flophouse, the Traveler's Hotel. It looked bad on the outside but the room was clean and nice. We found Kansas State parole forms in the desk drawer. For \$2 a night what do you want?

McPherson is in the heart of an oil patch and looked quite prosperous. We drove Main Street but we didn't spend any effort on finding the Traveler's Hotel. The possibility that it still existed was extremely small.



McPherson Opera House.



Grain elevators, Great Bend.

We pushed on to Great Bend, a large town where the Arkansas River makes a big curve to the southeast. Here they pronounce it as the R-Kansas River not the R-Can-Saw. We got settled at the Best Western Motel and then pulled the bikes out of the truck for some

after 6PM exploring.

We saw a dad and his two sons on horseback riding through the sand flats of the river and up the extensive levee and over to the highway. Now that's a dad!



A vaquero and his sons rode down from the river levee.

Around sunset we rode onto the grounds of the Great Bend Museum featuring historic buildings from the surrounding area.



Great Bend Museum grounds.

That wraps it up but Sue wanted you to read the blog damage waiver below and initial it when you are done.



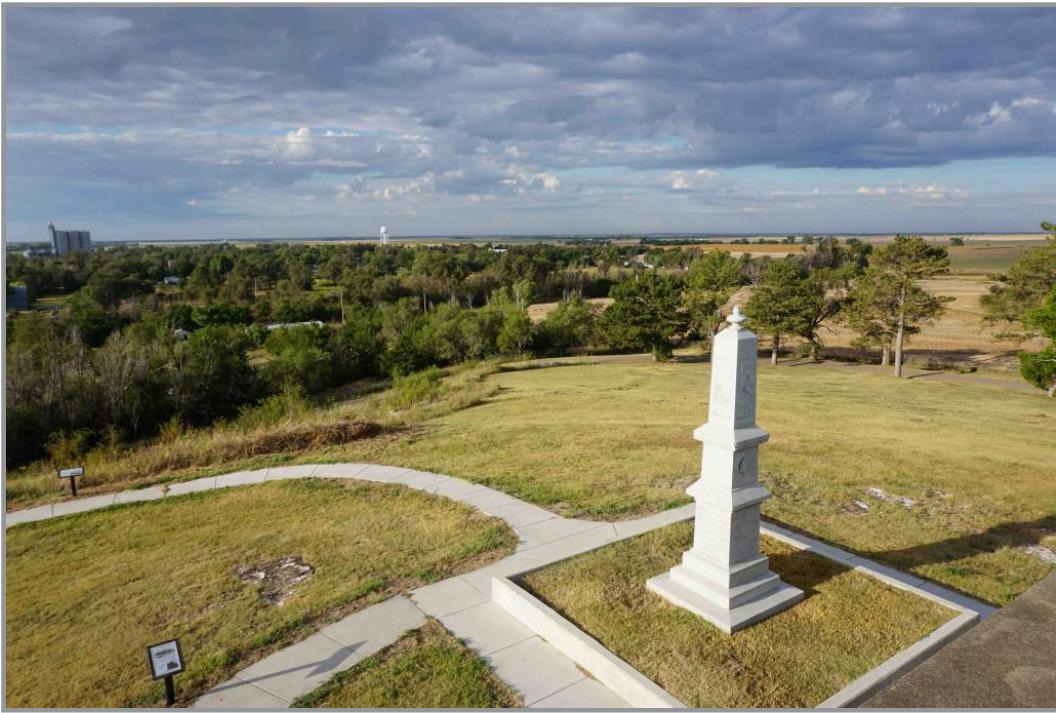
Day Eight: Kinsley, Kansas

Monday, September 14, 2015



Highway 56, Great Bend

We pulled out of Great Bend onto U.S. highway 56 headed to Larned and on to Kinsley. The route follows the old Santa Fe trail. Santa Fe today is still a small town so what was the big deal about getting to Santa Fe? In Santa Fe there was a trail south that lead to Mexico City. Think of it as an interstate of its day, linking an immense territorial area.



Atop Pawnee Rock, Pawnee Rock, Kansas.



Pawnee County jail, Larned, KS

First stop was Pawnee Rock (population 400), home of author Cheryl Unruh. The rock rises about eighty feet above the plains giving a commanding view of the Santa Fe trail area. Indians, scouts, settlers, and soldiers all sought to control the hill sometimes in

bloody engagements. The memorial dedicated to the early pioneers bears the name of one of Cheryl Unruh's ancestors.

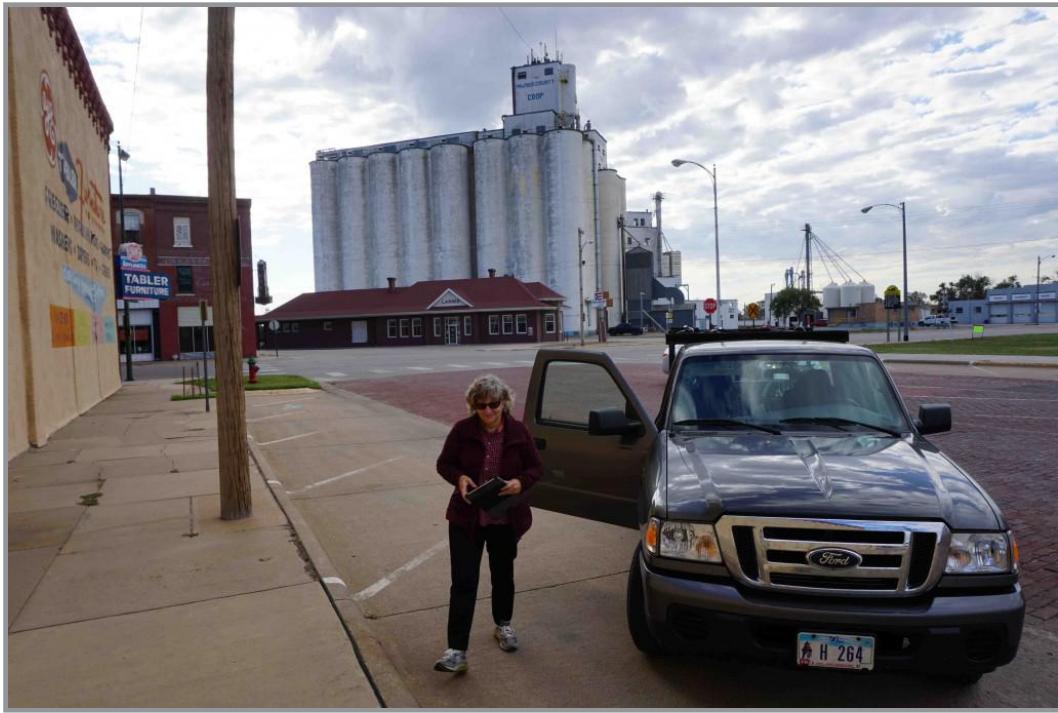
Next stop, Larned where Mike and I spent a night in the Pawnee County jail. We had to get up at 5AM and vacate the jail since they were transferring prisoners in the morning and didn't want us around for that. We spent the early morning at the Blue Goose Cafe, a Larned landmark famous in its day.

I asked at a coffee shop along Main Street as to the location of the Blue Goose. The lady didn't know but pointed to a group of ten seniors gathered around a table sharing their hospital experiences with morning coffee. "They might know", she said.

Not only did I get the location of the Blue Goose Cafe, they knew the Carlson family in Kinsley. In fact, one woman, Marleen Bard, had been Jim Carlson's supervisor when he worked at the Ford Dealership in Larned.



Larned Senior Center formerly the Blue Goose Cafe.



Larned, Kansas



Larned historic home



Many industrial sites have a large safety first sign. This operation presented a more philosophical perspective: 'Cities are what men make them'. Larned, KS.



U.S. highway 56

Heading southwest from Great Bend the land flattens out and homesteads are few and far between. Farm land stretches to the horizon. In Garfield, about 14 miles from Kinsley, I pulled into the town park to get out the bike for a ride into Kinsley, the last stretch we

biked on the 1965 trip. I wore a St. Ignatius t-shirt in commemoration of our high school days.



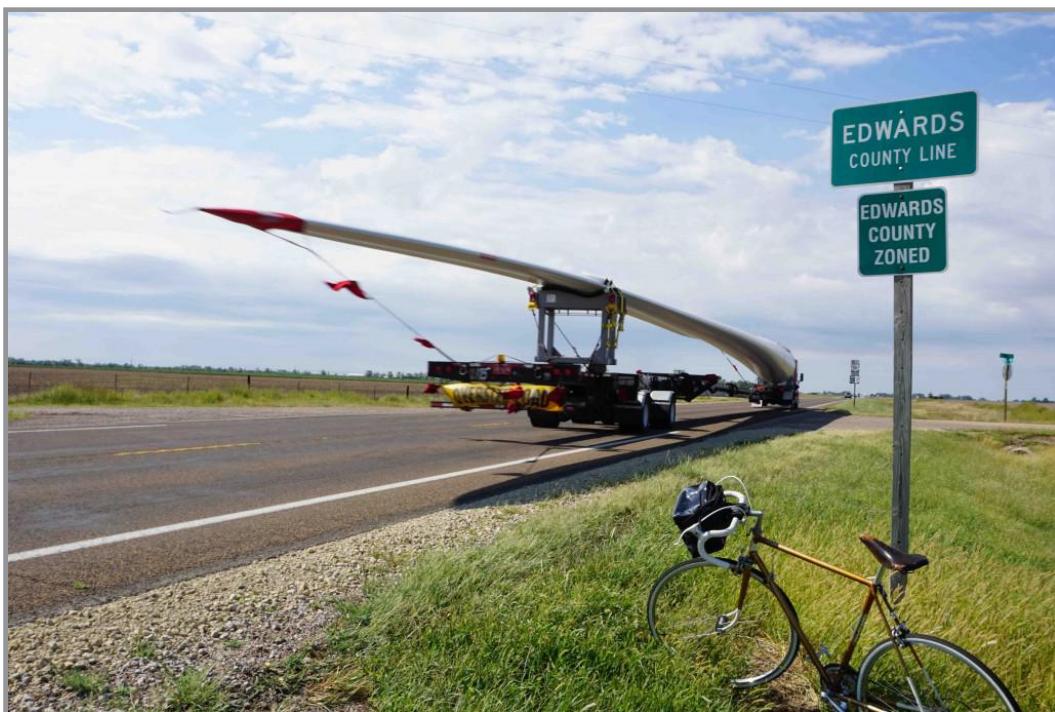
Garfield, KS. Early settlers from Ohio named the town after President James A. Garfield. Garfield gratefully donated a bell for the first church in town.



Garfield, KS. Line up of restored tractors.

The land is flat but it is inhospitable to biking. The wind blew out of the ten o'clock direction at a steady, constant, unwavering 15+ mph. When a semi passed in the opposite direction the suction ripped my cap from my head. There was no coasting, only constant pedaling. You really had to put your leg into it to make reasonable progress against the wind. There were no homesteads to distract my attention or add interest to the miles of farmland. Crossing the highway are section roads every mile that grid the land into large quadrants. These gravel roads are named after letters of the alphabet so you have some sense of progress as you move.

A pickup with flashing lights and oversize vehicle signs forewarned me of something big coming up behind me and I got off into the grass to let it pass.



Wind turbine blade outside Kinsley, KS.

While I biked, Sue drove around and found the train carrying the wind turbine pedestals. Up until this point we had not seen any wind turbines on our journey.



Dean and Mary Carlson at a family wedding

In 1965, a few miles outside Kinsley, a wheat farmer, Dean Carlson, pulled over his pickup onto the highway shoulder ahead of us. He asked us if we wanted a job for the day. He had 300 bales of hay on the floor of a barn near the Arkansas River and needed to get it up into the loft before the Arkansas overflowed its banks and flooded the barn. We said sure, we needed a serious break from pedaling into the wind.

Dean drove us into town, bought us leather work gloves, and helped us get started heaving bales of alfalfa into the loft. No question it was hard work but by noon, covered in sweat stuck alfalfa dust, we completed the job. We cleaned up by taking a bath in a galvanized tub in a shed.



The bale heavers. Kinsley, KS.

Dean drove us out to his farm for lunch. Wheat harvesting was going on and there must have been 12 - 15 people around a dinner table spread with more ham and beef and side dishes than I had ever seen.

At this time Mike and I decided to end the bicycle part of the adventure for a few different reasons. We had wanted to get to Dodge City and sleep in a jail there simply because *Gunsmoke*, a very popular TV western at the time, was set in Dodge City. That ambition was no longer possible since the highway to Dodge was closed due to flooding. We were also physically and psychologically beaten down by pedaling into the constant wind. We had no idea how far west we had to go before we might get some relief. And after coming across two-thirds of Kansas, all of Missouri, all of Illinois, all of Indiana, and two thirds of Ohio, we felt we had nothing to prove to anyone. Let's get to California all ready, there is only so much summer and so much money left!

Mr. Carlson went into town to get stove and refrigerator cardboard boxes that we used with baling wire to package up our bikes for shipment. He drove us to the train depot to ship our bikes via Railway Express.

Later in the afternoon, we rode on the combines reaping the fields and the trucks taking the harvested wheat to the grain elevators. In the evening, we went into town and met Dean's brother Leonard, who was the sheriff of Edwards County and the Marshall of Kinsley. Dean was a big man but Leonard was even bigger, probably 6'4" and 230 lbs. (We learned on this trip that Leonard never carried a gun but did have a 12 gauge shotgun in the patrol car.)

The next day, Mr. Carlson drove us about 25 miles outside of Kinsley down to U.S. highway 54 where we could hitch-hike and head toward Oklahoma.

Dean passed away from a brain tumor in the late eighties but his wife, Mary, and three sons, Jim, Gary and Tom still live in Kinsley.

Jim had invited us to stay at his home. He and his wife, Yvonne, graciously welcomed us into their home. We got acquainted, telling stories about our families, personal background, and interests.

Later, we drove out to the family homestead. Change since 1965 has been hard on the property. The home had a number of serious issues and has been torn down. The many elms that shaded the yard were lost to Dutch elm disease. Today, Jim's brother, Tom, continues to farm the extensive acreage and stores his equipment in the yard.



Sue and Jim Carlson at the Carlson family homestead.



Jim Carlson and Sue by a large area of the Carlson homestead farmed by Jim's brother, Tom. Wheat in the field had been harvested in June.



Carlson homestead Kinsley, KS.

Later, we met Jim's brother, Tom, and drove out the site of the barn where Mike and I heaved the bales. It had been blown down by 'straight wind' over twenty years ago.



Tom Carlson and Sue at the site of the hay bale barn. The tree line of the Arkansas River threads through the background.



Tom Carlson, Ed, Jim Carlson

Tom Carlson farms about 2,000 acres. He also runs cattle. In addition, he owns one of the two beer and liquor stores in Kinsley.



Tom Carlson at age 6 spreading out the grain as it shoots in from the combine.

Jim treated us like celebrities and hosted a family gathering in the evening. We met his mother, Mary; his brother, Gary; and other members of the Carlson clan.



Mary Carlson, Debbie, Gary Carlson, Jim Carlson, Yvonne Carlson, Ed

Jim Carlson owes an auto repair garage and auto parts store. His other interest is drag racing and he runs a competitive 1970 Ford Torino Super Cobra in a stock class. The car has been rated at over 700 horsepower and will pull a twelve inch wheel stand doing a quarter mile in 10.5 seconds. Jim has a second 1970 Torino Super Cobra with a 429 engine that he keeps for leisure use. After everyone left the party, he took me for a ride in it. The car is an automatic yet we left some serious rubber in second gear on Highway 50. One is seriously pressed back into the seat. And yes officer, we did not exceed the Kansas state speed limit.



Jim's street-use 1970 Ford Torino Super Cobra.

What an amazing day overflowing with good people, good feelings and new experiences.

I'll close on a sign in Jim and Yvonne's kitchen.



Day Nine: The Road to Dodge City

Monday, September 14, 2015



The movie theater curtain from Kinsley's Palace Theater, Kinsley Historical Society Museum.

It is so hard to leave. We were so welcomed by these wonderful people in Kinsley. We spent the morning in Jim and Yvonne's kitchen hearing stories and experiencing Jim's great sense of humor. There would be so much more to learn about rural life and agriculture, something I know nothing about.

There is also the sense of completion and its mixed feelings. On the one hand there is the satisfaction of reaching what had been the envisioned end point for so long. There is also a hollowness. It's been a fun ride but now the party is over.

Mike and I never made it to Dodge City, about 25 miles from Kinsley. Today Dodge was the objective. But first we backtracked a bit east to Lewis and to see what a town bearing Sue's last name might look like.



Three images of Lewis, KS.





From Lewis we headed over to Trousdale, the village where Jim Carlson has his garage and auto parts store.



Jim's Repair, Trousdale, KS.

A number of spent vehicles made their last gasp in the field around Jim's building.



International truck, Trousdale, KS.



Chevrolet pick up, Trousdale, KS.

We drove the gravel streets of Trousdale and found one other commercial establishment, a credit card only, self-serve filling station with no clerk or building.



Self-serve gas station, Trousdale, KS.

Back on the road to Dodge, we came upon a wind farm outside Spearsville. The array might have included 150 turbines. You can hear them in the wind. It's a white noise sound much like the low rumble of traffic.



Spearsville, KS wind farm



Spearsville, KS

It's quite a desolate run from Kinsley to Dodge, wide open country and oncoming winds. It made me think that Dean Carlson's intervention in our trip 50 years ago was a bit of our guardian angels saying, "this is far enough boys". We couldn't have gotten better help.

After fifty years, I did get to a jail in Dodge City. Does the one in the hotel lobby count?



Day Ten: Wind and Karma

Tuesday, September 15, 2015



Refrigerated trailers at National Beef plant, Dodge City, KS.

Dodge City still lives on large herds coming to town either of the horned or human variety. On the outskirts of town are large cattle lots and meat packing is a large industry in town. A section of downtown is very welcoming to tourists looking for stories of cowboys, six-shooters, and Wyatt Earp.



30 mph winds lifting soil. US 400, east of Dodge City, KS.

Today the wind is blowing at 30 mph consistently without wavering. It's been blowing around the clock and is expected to do so for three days. It can pick up the surface of the soil and get it moving. This part of the state bordered the epicenter of the 1930's dust bowl, an environmental disaster that lasted several years and dislocated tens of thousands of people. Today we saw what unrelenting wind can do to a very small area left without cover of any kind. Jim Carlson told us that wheat stubble is left on the fields after harvest in June to help hold the surface soil in place. It seems to work exceptionally well.



Along US 400 east of Dodge City.

We passed what looked like a colorful mound of people and gear alongside the highway. "Were those guys bicycling?" We made a U-turn and came back.

Meet Dylan and Ethan Horne, two brothers from North Carolina biking across America. They were fixing a flat and nursing their despair in making little progress against the wind. When they found out we were headed to Wichita, they asked for a ride. How could we refuse? We unpacked our luggage so the jump seats in the extended cab could fold down and some how we got everything and everybody in the truck.



Packing up

On the 120 mile ride to Wichita we learned they have been on the road for 120 days and had already made it out to the west coast and were returning to North Carolina. In their travels they had been to eighteen states and Canada, rode the west coast from Oregon to San Diego, and were thinking about adding a few more southern states before they got home to Salisbury, NC by Thanksgiving.

Dylan is a master degreed civil engineer who got tired of designing improvements for railroad right-of-ways and was looking for something more. When a mutual friend suggested they join him on a documentary film project involving a cross country bike trip, he and brother Ethan took the bait. Some where along the way they split up from the film project.



Sue, Dylan and Ethan, US 400.

So what gear did they find to be unexpectedly beneficial? Ethan thought bicycle shorts made a very big difference. He picked up some along the way and became a convert.

They camped a lot but used a fly rather than a tent. Dylan used a mylar thermal blanket and a hammock to sleep out. He practiced this technique by sleeping outside for a portion of the past winter. Dylan carried a guitar with him.

After taking them to lunch, we drove them to Augusta the next small town east of Wichita where they would find less traffic and a safer roadway. Dylan wanted to sing us two songs he composed along the way. He finds pedaling to be beneficial to putting lyrics together. We enjoyed the songs very much.



Dylan sings and Ethan packs, Augusta, KS.

Dylan hopes to meld his civil engineering skills with the experience of his great bicycle adventure to create a much more bicycle friendly urban environment. Brother Ethan would agree, "Right on."

Day Eleven: Off the Pavement

Wednesday, September 16, 2015



Last night in Wichita we visited my niece, Frances and her husband, Jaramie. Their two miniature fox terriers greeted us with sharp barking and high springing jumps nearly up to my belly button. They moved to Wichita from Erie, PA (Frances and Jaramie that is) a little over a year ago and now both work for the Veterans Administration. They were quite glad to see some familiar faces.



Hesston, KS.



This morning we headed north to Hesston, the boyhood home of my friend Kermit Lind. We got out the bikes and toured this town that is central to a large Mennonite section of Kansas.

Hesston is a prosperous, tidy town. We kept looking for the run-down part of town and

couldn't find it. The community features Excel Industries, a maker of power mowers and Hesston College, a two year liberal arts college.



Quilted welcoming display in the Hesston College student center



Smiley's Storage Hesston, KS. Steel buildings are so prevalent across America that they are nearly invisible as architecture. Our attention span tunes them out. The name of this

one caught my eye and got me to pay attention.

We ate lunch at the college student center and visited their bookstore to see what's on the required reading list. I picked up three very interesting books including a compendium of American radical thought from Thomas Paine to the present.

We headed to Matfield Green, a Flint Hills village and home to Pioneer Bluffs, a prairie educational and ecological center. Although it was closed, we met Floyd Beck. He said, "You look like you haven't been off the pavement." He pointed on the map to an interesting gravel road route through the Flint Hills range land.



Floyd and Sue. Matfield Green, KS.

But first, we had to stop at his friend Bill McBride's studio. Bill is a transplant Chicago architect who now sculpts in a studio he built on a parcel of land along the BNSF rail line. The acreage was an old cattle loading station. Today, Bill says 70 trains pass the place daily. "Luckily there are no crossings so they don't blow the horn". Learn more at BillMcBridestudio.com



Bill McBride's place Matfield Green, KS.



Bill McBride in his studio



The McBride acreage. Sue is the spike on the ridge.

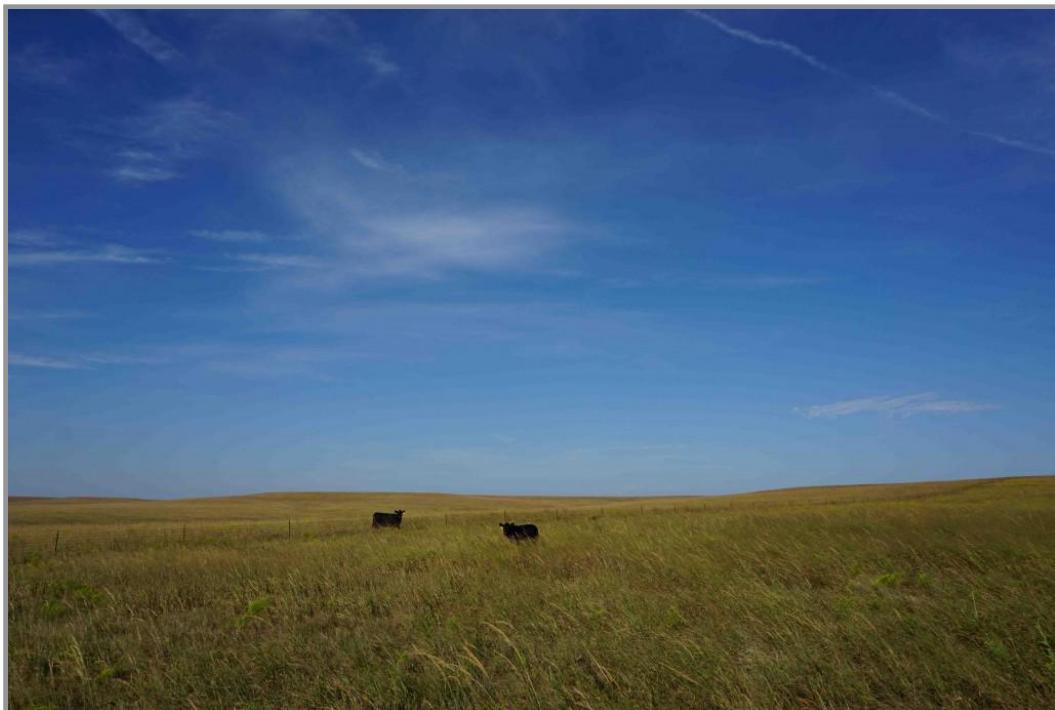


Flint Hills range land images

We took Floyd's advice and got on the gravel. Soon we were riding on a one lane road separating two private ranges, prairie grasses as far as one could see.

Only 1% of the virgin prairie that extended from Texas to North Dakota exists today. Of that portion, 85% is found in the Flint Hills range.

The grasses stand about knee high. They mound and flow in a potpourri of species, textures, and colors. An animal lying down is easily hidden. I approached a lone angus steer behind a far fence. As I got within a hundred feet of him I jumped when another steer unseen in the grass on my side of the fence who was visiting the first, arose to see who was coming.





We drove and drove not quite sure exactly where we were in a network of very thin red lines on the detailed map. Turns and forks lined up so we kept driving. The afternoon wore on. We saw no other vehicles, no homes. The crunch of rocky gravel made me start to think about the odds of getting a flat out here.



We came to a 'T' in the road but it didn't match where we thought we were on the map. The anxiety bucket began to fill. We turned to the GPS and entered the closest town on

the map. Miss Garmin came on to guide us. Another 15 miles on a tangle of gravel roads got us out of the maze.



In town I noticed my tire pressure light came on. The tire was half flat and any service garage would be closed by now. I put in a can of Fix-A-Flat at the nearest gas station. It held, and we were back on the road. That was close!

Day Twelve: Driving East Hurts My Eyes

Friday, September 18, 2015



Missouri countryside, 94 degree heat.

Heading east in the morning puts the early sun in my eyes. It hurts. I'd much rather be heading west in the morning.

We decided to make this day a blitz day for heading home. We left Emporia with the goal of getting completely across Missouri and spending the night in Quincy, Illinois on the Mississippi River.

We took the Interstate to Kansas City which meant we saw nothing. Outside the city we got onto US 24 running clear across Missouri. It had very little traffic, good pavement, and many small towns.



Old time gas station, Missouri

Religious signs and evangelical churches alerted us that we were in the Bible belt. The countryside began to look like the familiar midwest of rolling hills, trees, corn and soybeans, and homesteads within walking distance of each other.



Missouri town window

I'd like to be more positive but I think the country people of Missouri are hurting. It seemed we saw a number of mental health outreach centers along Main St. in a number of towns. The people at the convenience store gas stations we stopped at, both customers and clerks, seemed unhealthy by appearance and grim in attitude. The kicker was the Mexican restaurant.



Las Carritas restaurant, Lexington, MO.

We parked in Lexington for lunch. After walking around the downtown block we found only two restaurants open other than the McDonalds. The first, a sports bar, we ditched after walking in and finding food service to be an afterthought and customers wanting lunch, a likely nuisance. The second, a Mexican restaurant, looked fine.

A tall Mexican man, the likely owner, seated us. We instantly warmed to the place when we tasted their chips and salsa. Excellent! We felt lucky to find the only open local restaurant.

So it was disturbing to overhear a middle-aged white guy talking to his two elderly church-lady type guests. He told them they should support Ted Cruz for President because he is against immigration. What doesn't he see sitting in the only open locally owned restaurant in this town?



Jesus Christ, our soon coming king, Missouri

I saw this sign at the approach to the Mississippi bridge so I couldn't stop and do it justice. It is a huge sign bigger than a large billboard. If this kind of messaging is a steady diet in the Bible belt no wonder things are messed up.



We crossed the Mississippi into Quincy. All of Missouri is behind us.

Day Thirteen: Squeezing Out the Last Drops

Friday, September 18, 2015



New US 24 bridge across the Mississippi, Quincy, IL.

Quincy, Illinois is proud that it was the scene of one of the pivotal Abraham Lincoln / Stephen Douglas debates that catapulted Lincoln to national prominence for his anti-slavery stance. Somewhat synchronistically, we watched the current Republican second presidential candidates debate in our hotel room.



At Quincy, the Mississippi River is wide and appears as a large lake bending off into the distance. Steep streets lead up from the industrial riverfront to the business district. In the 1870's Quincy was an economic engine and the town retains many of the buildings from that period.



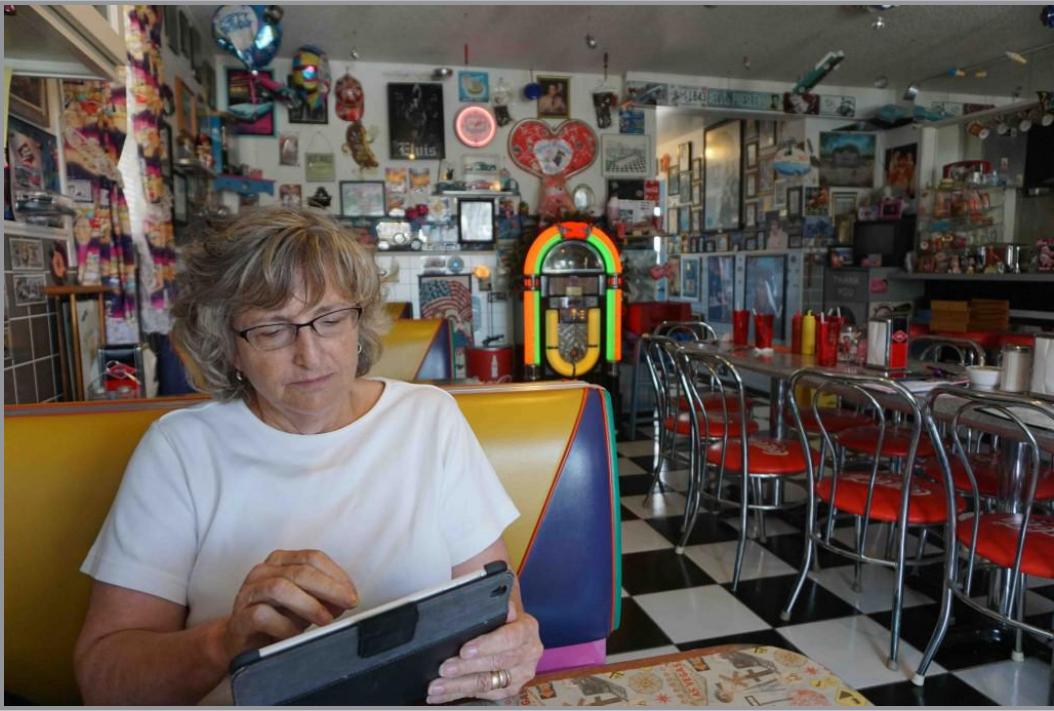
Quincy, IL

Today would be our second last day on the road. We biked around town in the morning. Piling in the truck, we set our travel goal for Elkhart, Indiana, about 325 miles away. Elkhart is very close to where we will pick up Interstate 90 for the trip to Cleveland, but more importantly, it is the home of the Walter Piano Company. I hope we can tour the factory on Friday.

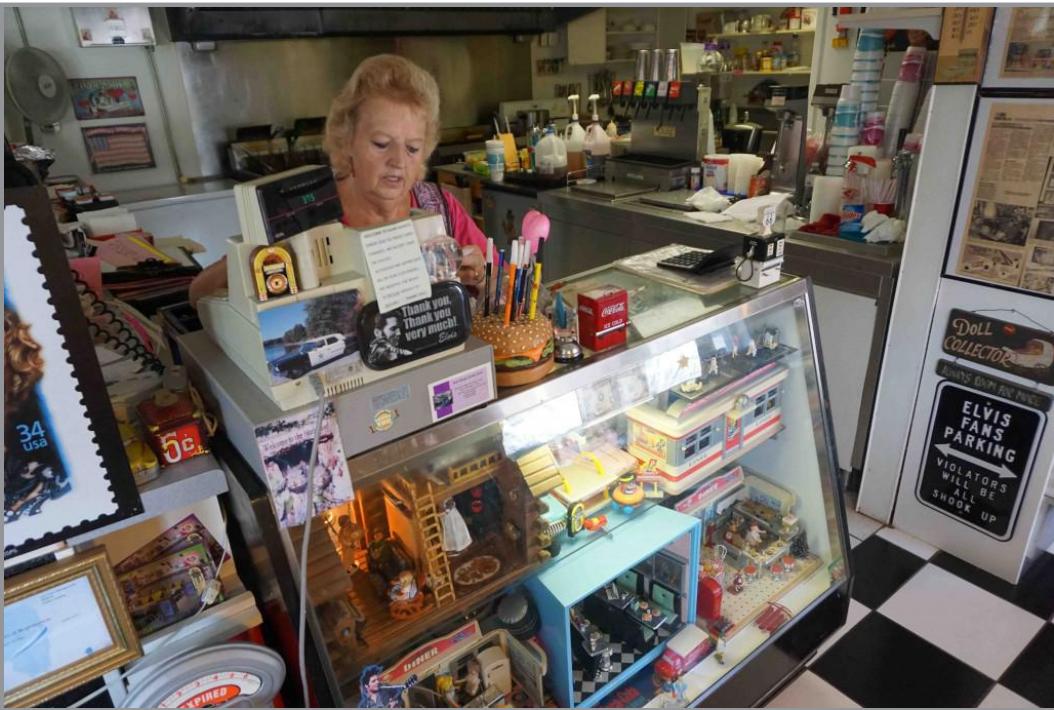


Wiemelt's, Quincy, IL. Just up the hill from the river is the Wiemelt shop and race car.

We stayed on US 24 and much of the Illinois countryside looked similar to what we saw on the way out. We stopped for lunch in Astoria at the Slaw Dawgs Cafe (being from Cleveland we are naturally drawn to the word Dawgs). It is billed as a 50s and 60s diner but is a bit more accurately described as a shrine to Elvis. Please note, they have a Slaw Dawgs Astronomy Club that meets monthly. Check it out. <http://www.slawdawgs50-60sdiner.com/Pages/SlawDawgsAstronomyClubIL.aspx>



Slaw Dawgs, Astoria, IL.



Slaw Dawgs owner, Denis. She calls everyone, "Hon".



Slaw Dawg diner. I loved this booth color scheme.

We pushed on through more corn and more soybean fields, two wind farms, and a section of the countryside posting signs opposing wind farms.



Illinois wind turbines.

About 50 miles from Elkhart we had a number of choices on how to proceed north. We chose a convenient route that would take us through Rensselaer, home to St. Joseph College. In Day One of this blog, I mentioned my aunt, Sister Anthony, who we visited at Carthegena, Ohio in 1965. In the mid 50's when I was about six years old, she was stationed at St. Joseph College and our family visited her there. I remember only that it was the pre-season training camp site for the Chicago Bears and that it had a large pond where we fed popcorn to ducks.

We took a quick tour of the campus, a pretty spot, and saw the pond, now lined and circumscribed with concrete.



St. Joseph College, Rensselaer, IN.

When we left St. Joseph my tire pressure warning light came on. The tire that took some damage in the Flint Hills had a slow leak in it. I filled it up and drove another 20 miles until the light came on again. I carry a spare tire but it is under the truck bed. After seven Cleveland winters, I'm sure getting it unbolted would be a problem. I nursed the tire along with a few more pump-up stops. As darkness came on, we pulled into Elkhart.

Once at the hotel, I went back out to the highway and filled the tire for the night. In the morning, if it's drivable, I'll find a tire store and get it repaired. If not, I'll have to get down to business and get the spare out.

Day Fourteen: A Tale of Two City Tire Stores

Saturday, September 19, 2015



Traffic, Elkhart, IN.

It's the last day on the road and we're ready to wrap it up. But two matters first need attention. We need to get the tire repaired and we hope to see the Charles Walter Piano showroom.

We found Carter Tire on the miracle mile. They could take us in an hour so we made arrangements to visit the piano showroom in the meantime.

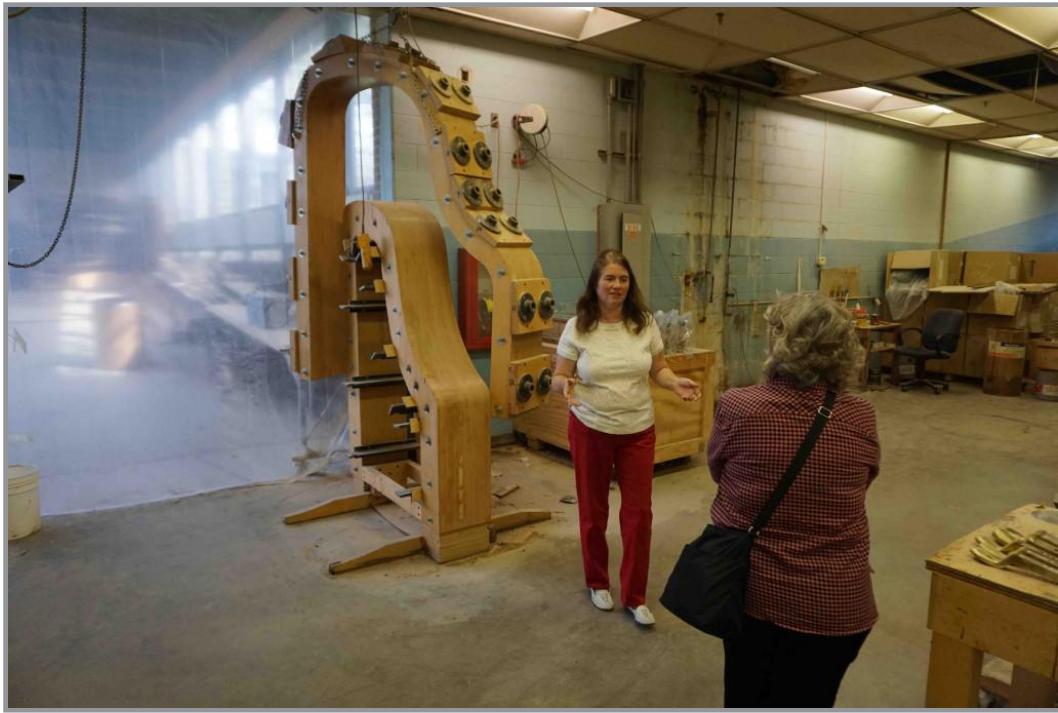


Charles Walter and daughter, Rachel. Elkhart, IN.

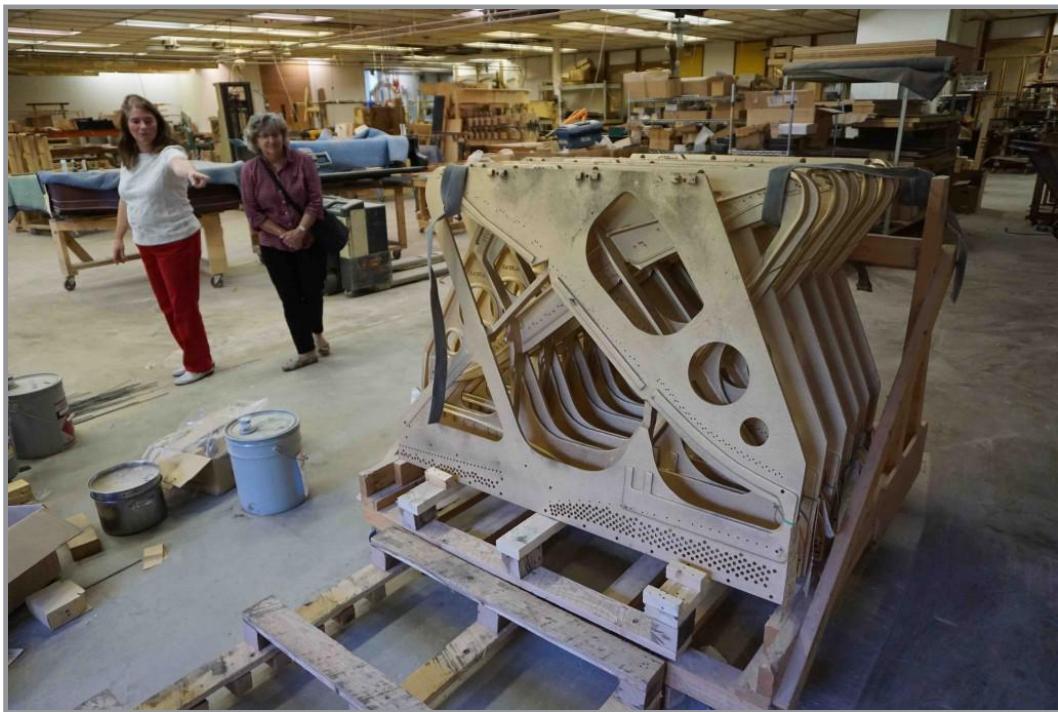
Imagine my surprise when I met 88 year old Charles Walter, the man who started manufacturing pianos in 1975. They are one of three piano manufacturers left in the United States, competing with Steinway and Mason and Hamlin.

Speaking in nearly mythic terms, the Walter piano had been recommended to me by my piano tuner. I had to hear this instrument and I played a few in the showroom. I was stunned by the quality of their studio piano (think of it as a short upright). It had a very clear tone, delightfully crisp action, and a good, full, rich low end, the element that is so missing in many studio size pianos.

Mr. Walter's daughter Rachel manages the business and took us on a tour of the factory.



Grand piano case bending jig.



Cast metal harps.



Piano soundboard and back structure.



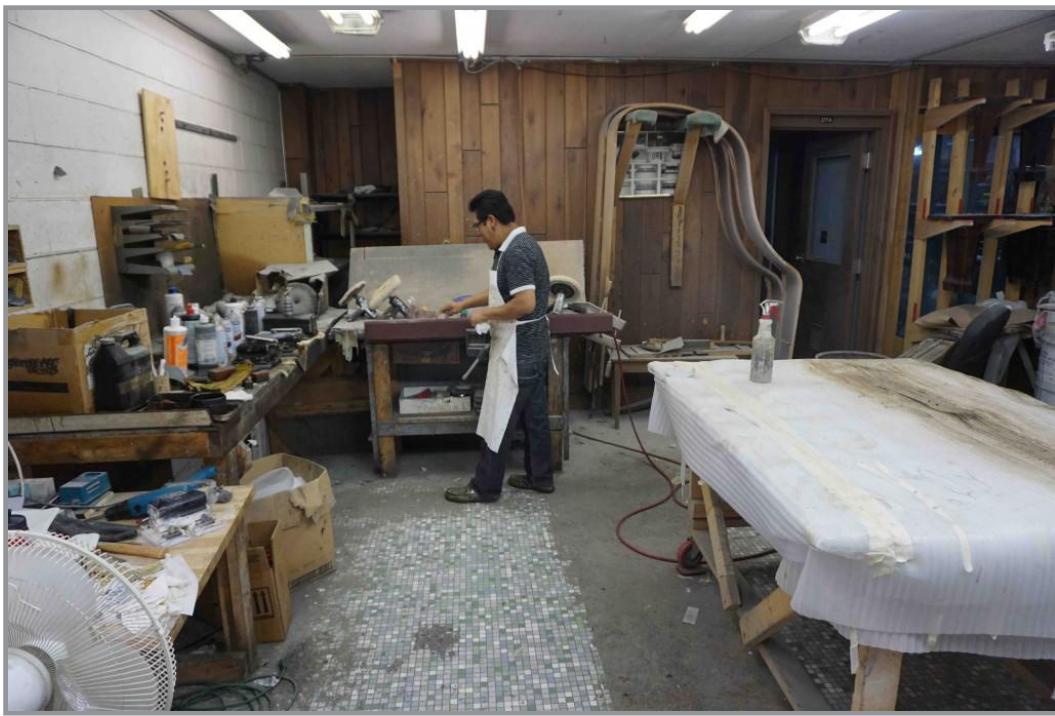
Stringing the harp.



Preparing the keyboard.



Final adjustments of keys and action.



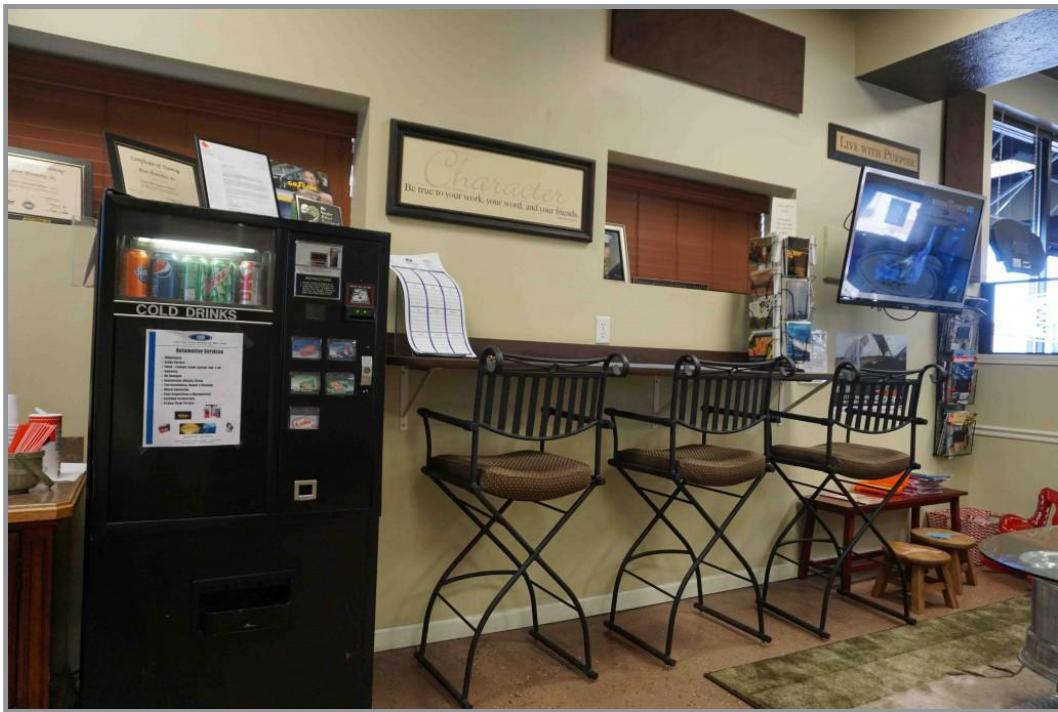
Hand rubbing of case parts.



Harp detail.

A tremendous amount of handwork goes into building a piano. Rachel introduced us to their small staff, most of whom have been with the company for over fifteen years. Their business is down from where it had been prior to the 2008 meltdown but they are

buoyantly optimistic. They indeed make an exceptionally high quality, peerless instrument. I'm completely sold. If I would downsize from my grand piano, I would want a Walter studio piano.



Carter Tire waiting room.

We went back to Carter Tire and got in the service rotation. I looked around the waiting room. There was a bible quotation mural on the wall and some graphics related to character and integrity. After a coffee and a magazine article, the technician came out and said they can't repair the tire. He said it had "weather cracking". Huh? We went out to take a look. The technician ambiguously pointed to the tire shoulder saying it had "weather cracking and all of your tires do." What did that mean? It meant they weren't even going to put air in the tire to find out where the leak is. They were afraid that the tire might explode if they put air in it. I told them I had inflated it five or six times in the past day. They were not going to touch such a lethal object. When I adamantly said I am not buying a new tire, the technician dropped the keys in my hand.

Quite vexed, we found a convenience store gas station with an air pump, filled the tire, and drove into the city to find another supplier. We came upon Master Automotive. I explained my situation to the owner and he asked if I tried the tire store across the street. I quickly explained the previous experience. I just want the leak fixed. He said, the tire store would be the best place and he called them. He explained over the phone that he had a customer with a tire "that needed a little lovin' ". I felt better already.



Star Tire and Brake, Elkhart, IN.

I went into Star Tire and Brake, explained the issue and Tom told me to come back in twenty minutes. We found a diner across the street, ate lunch and came back. The truck was ready. "You picked up a nail" Tom said. "That truck's in good shape. What year is it?"

The bill came to \$16. I noticed a Star Tire and Brake t-shirt on the wall with their slogan "We'll make it happen" across the back. I wanted to pad the bill a bit to thank him for the great service and I asked him if I could buy a shirt. He paused a second with a quizzical look, asked my size and went in the back. He came back and tossed the shirt on the counter. "It's on the house" he said. I protested strongly, "NO, No way!" This went on a bit until he explained that I was the first person to ever ask for one of their shirts!



Star Tire and Brake, since 1965.

In five thousand miles I will be due for new tires on the truck. I am thinking of making the drive to Elkhart just to deal again with such straight-ahead people.

We got on the Indiana Turnpike and settled in. The Ohio line came and went, then Westlake, then home. The trip was over. The tire didn't explode.



Once We Got to Los Angeles

Thursday, September 24, 2015



Disneyland, 1965. Gun fight shoot-out presented as entertainment. Not sure that would fly today.

Once we got to Los Angeles we spent two weeks with Mike's aunt and uncle, the Quilligans. Two other classmates, Ray Dobbins and Daryl Doran came out via hitch-hiking and bus and joined up with us. Together, we went to Disneyland and the LaBrea tar pits.

While in LA, we helped the Quilligans move to San Clemente further south down the coast. Here we tried our hand at surfing and took a day trip to Tijuana.



San Clemente, CA. Mike, Daryl, Ray, Ed, 1965.

And we raised our flag on a hillside overlooking the ocean. "Freemonting Ex-zerbies Forever". It was a bit of non-sense we used as our in-group mantra.

We split up for the trip back home. Ray and I took a very inexpensive commuter flight to San Francisco. Here we connected with our St. Ignatius chemistry teacher, J. Leo Duggan. Mr. Duggan might still hold the title as having been the most eccentric teacher at Ignatius.



J. Leo Duggan with his wife Edith and daughter Margrette San Francisco, CA. 1965

Mr. Duggan spent his summer in Berkley each year, taking a course at the University of California. He was tickled to see us. He showed his enthusiasm by hiring a chauffeur-driven limousine for the afternoon and giving us a personal tour of the city. Along with his wife and daughter he took us out to a fine dinner at one of his favorite restaurants. He carried only brand-new currency with him and paid with fresh bills. He never accepted any coins in change. The tip he left on the table included not only fresh bills, but a few picture postcards of the city. He carried a half-inch wad of them in a jacket pocket for just such a purpose. In retrospect the day with the Duggan family was one of the most charming days of my life.

My money was running low. Time to head home. Ray wanted to stay in San Francisco so we split up. I had enough money for a train ticket to St. Louis. Getting off the train, I found I had just enough money to buy a bus ticket to Dayton, Ohio. I hadn't much to eat for two days on the train.

I started hitch-hiking from Dayton. By 7 PM, I was in Lodi about 40 miles south of Cleveland. With a dime from the last forty cents in my pocket, I put in a collect call to my parents. "Could you come down and pick me up?" They were happy to.

Final Thoughts: The Inner Journey

Thursday, September 24, 2015

This is the hardest page to write. My daughter Loretta wanted to know what the "inner trip" was like as we rode the route of the 1965 adventure. The Kinsley people wondered what the trip would've been like if Roach were still alive. I looked for what might be the big arc of personal growth over the past fifty years.

Writing about one's inner dialogue is like writing about music. One hears the song and understands the landscape of feelings but how does one find the language and words to describe something that is not about words? I'll try by working from two pictures.



Smiley's Storage, Hesston, KS.

My enlightenment started in Hesston, Kansas. When I saw this building in Hesston, I realized I had seen thousands of steel buildings like this along the way but paid no attention to them. I tuned them out as if their utilitarian purpose had no meaning. Their monotonous design made them invisible. This one suddenly popped the bubble and I was no longer blind to them. I saw my error.

At the Hesston College student book store I picked up a used copy of *The Radical Reader*, a compendium of essays written by great Americans who led and inspired much social change. As I leafed through it I had a revelation much like the steel building blindness. I realized my life has been on the arc of the American radical tradition. Back in 1965, we were inspired by the likes of radical voices in the civil rights and anti-war movement. We were inspired by some of our high school teachers who wanted us to think beyond the mainstream, ask questions, and take action. Roach and I were a modern reincarnation of that radical character, Huckleberry Finn, who "lighted out for the

territory" using the means at hand.

I wish there were another word other than radical. It sounds so foreign and negative, so out-there as to be easily dismissed. I want a word that describes a person who is not wedded to the mainstream, a person who is exploring and leading by example where the mainstream might flow in order to make things better for everyone, a person who is not just living on an island with a population of one.

The radical arc in my life continued with film school, marrying the woman I met while volunteering at the Near West Side People's Free Clinic, and spending thirteen career years in an entrepreneurial company. In middle age I mellowed more into the mainstream to nurture family responsibilities yet within that realm I sought opportunities to support entrepreneurial efforts.

So there it was plainly before me, the radical arc. I never thought of myself as a radical. Possibly when I eventually find a better word than radical to describe the condition, I might be more satisfied with it being a reflection of myself. The word just might be, "American".



Sue and the Horne brothers.

In retelling stories from the 1965 trip, a number of people have told me, "You could never do a trip like that today."

Why would they say such a thing? Too much TV inspired passivity, negativity, low confidence?

You can do a **far greater** trip today. My evidence is Dylan and Ethan Horne who had bicycled for 120 days when we met them. They started with their toe in the Atlantic Ocean in North Carolina and had already been out to California via Montana and were returning

to their North Carolina hometown by Thanksgiving.

It's all about wanting to do it. The means can be simple but never doubt that just putting one foot in front of the other and taking it day by day, you'll get there.

As Sue put it:

Use your gun to shoot your TV

and I'll finish that with:

And light out for the territory.

I will forever be grateful to my parents, John and Mary, for letting me spread my wings.

-END



0103147134



Non-customer created content © SharedBook and its licensors.
All rights reserved by their respective parties. Patents pending
for the SharedBook technology. NOT FOR RESALE.
For personal, noncommercial use only.
LIABILITY LIMITED TO COST OF PRODUCT.

JUL 65

