

Homeward Bound

Phil initiated the trip...kind of. The plan was to head out for Birmingham, Alabama to visit a major motorcycle museum. Pretty last moment, I felt a need to spend some time with my mother in Humboldt, Tennessee, which has no museum of any kind though an argument can be made that it has some museum like features. As usual, Phil was flexible and as usual, we plotted a path that avoided interstate highways also as usual.

The ride up was anything but boring but unless you were the one riding, reading about it would be boring because it was pretty much picture perfect.....weather, roads, scenery, you name it. Phil did not even get into trouble by going into the women's bathroom...this time.

The number of churches along the way was amazing and appalling at the same time. It was Sunday morning and Phil must have been feeling a lot of guilt that he was not in attendance. He mentioned them a number of times and often pointed to them as we passed. I kept telling him we had a lot of miles to cover and we did not have time to indulge. I should not have been surprised. I know he tells his wife Dorothee that he has band practice in Lakeway each Sunday morning but secretly attends a Primitive Baptist church in Spicewood.

I must admit, I have a soft spot for old houses. In the early 90's I breathed new life into a late 30's 650 sq. ft. farmhouse. I worked on it every weekend for 2 years and collected doors and windows wood, doorknobs etc. from the Habitat for Humanity on my lunch hour. The before and after pictures of the house I restored below tell the story.



I bring this up because of all the old home places that have been allowed to go to ruin or torn down to make place for a manufactured home when for the costs of these disposable eye sore tin houses, those old homes could have been made into beautiful homes. It was more obvious when the trailers were simply placed in front of a falling down 30's vintage home. It was just as bad when a mobile home is surrounded by beautiful 100-year-old trees with plowed fields on each side. When you see this, you know this is a crime scene. Some idiot has torn down the family home and put a trailer in it's place. We must have passed 500 of these. I found it heart breaking.

The other atrocity we also passed 500 times and almost as difficult to look at were Family Dollar stores. How much cheap plastic crap does it take to decorate those tin tombstones that now mark the graves of once beautiful old homes?

We arrived alive in Humboldt and went straight to the SOS (sip of suds) a really class joint to get the scoop and have an adult beverage before going the last ¼ mile to my mom's home.

Phil had planned to stay about a half day there before heading out to Birmingham but he heard mom tell a friend that Nathan and Phil were going to get on the roof the next day and clean the gutters. When I got up, Phil was nowhere in sight and I get up early! In fact, mother did put me on the roof for 3 hours of cleaning gutters. The roof is pretty steep and we had a dew the night before. Mother said she was worried the whole time I might fall and was praying for me. I guess the \$75 she saved on getting them professionally cleaned trumped her concerns.

The ride back home was eventful. Heavy weather was accurately forecasted. I left early but only made it to Memphis before the bottom fell out. The radar showed deep cherry red around Little Rock, which is the I-40 route and fastest way home. As crazy as it sounds, I had planned to make the 740 mile trip in one day and have done so many times. Interstate riding in heavy weather is a bad plan. When you pass the big trucks they throw an avalanche of water that takes your visibility to zero for the length of the truck. The length of the truck at 80

mph only takes 10 seconds but holding it straight in total black out and hoping for the best is spooky, at least for me.

Bottom-line, I diverted to the path we took on the way up....US 79 which connects Humboldt, Tennessee to Round Rock Texas coincidentally. I could see the storm in the west for almost an hour inside of Arkansas before I could see the storm everywhere. It was pretty. Giant lightening bolts on both sides of the road sometimes at the same time. The rain was blowing sideways and the wind was trying its best to push my bike into the water filled ditch on my port side. There were places where the ditches had overflowed into the road and I was riding in 3 inches of water while pretty much guessing where the road was. Visibility, even at 20 mph was damn near zero.

There was no place to stop without fear of the logging trucks running over you and making you take on the appearance of an armadillo that also made a bad decision. I was getting that Southwest Airline feeling of “just wanna get away” when a lighten bolt lit up a small general store one road over to the left. I negotiated the gravel and water road about .1 mile to the place, parked and waded in. The owner was sweeping water out of the front door but he was open for business! I ordered a burger and asked the lady behind the counter if they had beer. She told me in her best Baptist accent that the certainly did not, further, that there was a “Beer Joint” down the road but “Beer Joints” did not open until night. I stood corrected and let the issue drop, despite the fact that I actually have been in establishments selling beer before noon, but then she might not seen parts of the world I have, more likely no other parts of the world at all.

The lightening and wind subsided though the rain was more resilient so I pushed on at a relatively slow pace to Shreveport, La., got a no-tell Motel for \$56 and called it a day.

I road in the rain the next day but nothing to comment on....just Family Dollar stores, manufactured homes and churches. I did take a pic of a combo manufactured home and church.



As my late step father would say, “now I have been to two county fairs and a hog calling and I do not believe I have seen anything quite like that!”

Happily home safely with another good memory and story in my quiver!