

Days 9-15

Sunday 6/23, took off from Columbus towards Detroit (~220 miles), where I stayed with a friend. Nice ride through the Ohio countryside for the first several hours before intersecting the interstate through Toledo and then Detroit. He and his fiancé (both 20 somethings) took me to see "The Henry Ford" museum, an awesome and eclectic collection of cars and machinery and history and furniture. We also did a quick tour through the city, where we saw large scale building abandonment and decay. After a swim at the apartment complex, we had a nice dinner out.

At this point, am 10 days and about 2000 miles into the trip. No issues whatsoever yet.

Monday 6/24 took off into the Michigan hinterlands to spend a week camping and hiking along the Great Lakes shore and experiencing both the lower and upper peninsulas (the latter is apparently referred to as "The U.P." by those of 'us' in the know). The Michigan welcome rest stop lady was kind enough to load me up with plenty of booklets and maps. The tough part will be distilling down the choices to what I want to sample in the 5 days available to explore it all. You should all have such problems (I hear you thinking).

Left my friends in Detroit in perfect weather. Headed directly into the city in order to drive by Grosse Pointe, where the big homes are (remember that great movie "Grosse Pointe Blanc"?). While on the inner city expressway, came around a bend and w/o warning found that the left lane was closed. The guy in front of me locked up his brakes and got stuck at the barrier. I instinctively darted right and successfully avoided the first accident of the trip. I couldn't believe how M-DOT failed to provide warning so looked around at other drivers to see if it was just me, but everyone just put their hands up and shook their heads in semi-shock at what we had just been exposed to. It was so ridiculous that in after effect it was funny and some of us just laughed at each other.

Grosse Pointe is amazingly beautiful. Huge house after house looking better than Beverly Hills, but situated on the gorgeous Lake St. Clair. The contrast with the just experienced bombed out inner Detroit was surreal. Spent that day driving up along the coast of "the thumb" and then into "the mitten" (look at a map of Michigan and you'll immediately understand). Throughout the day, it was a cloudless sky with ambient air temperature at 90 degrees. Adding the unfiltered sun's radiant heat and you would be correct in assuming that it was hot. Saved by a liberal coating of sun screen and the goofy hat. Finally made camp (tent) at Tawas Point State Park. At this point I have to give a plug for the Michigan State Park system. Numerous well maintained parks all over the state, in beautiful settings. At Tawas Point, I was able to take a refreshingly cold swim in a nice sandy beach on Lake Huron, cleaning off all of the day's grime. It felt wonderful! That evening, one of my trailer camping neighbors invited me over to his bonfire, and we spent a nice 1.5 hours chatting before hitting the sack after midnight. The next morning I did a 3 mile run before once again diving into the cold lake. Just as I started breaking camp it started to drizzle. Fortunately it abated after a few minutes and was able to pack up without too much getting wet. Took off and it started drizzling again. Pulled into a service station to fill up under a portico, and left the pump to go in and get a bag of ice for my cooler. Some guy comes running in shouting "whoever owns the Cobra, its leaking gas!" It appears the pump failed to shut off and about a gallon overflowed. The station manager came out and explained that if you don't put the nozzle in all the way, it can happen. I explained that my fuel inlet is vertical and that gravity held the nozzle in all the way. He then laid litter down on my wet spot, at which point I noticed that every fuel bay had a stain and remnants of kitty

litter on it. Me thinks the problem was not mine! Ran into another small rain shower shortly after that and got a free car wash. Problem solved! I actually enjoy driving through a light and short drizzle more than the hot sunshine. A lot more comfortable and everything smells fresher.

The clouds abated and the sun came out to cook me once again. Took one of my several picturesque rest breaks along Lake Huron at Seagull Point. A local police officer came driving around making his rounds. He challenged my presence there so I had to take him out....Nah, he was a great guy, Sportster 1200 rider and we chatted for about 15 minutes and then he posed his car for a nose-to-nose picture. Decided to escape the heat and stay in the cheapest hotel (aka "flop house") in Mackinaw City to get some air conditioning. Walked several miles to tour a retired Coast Guard ice breaker- nick named "The Mighty Mac"- (facilitated winter Great Lakes shipping), watched a video of the building of the 5 mile Mackinac Bridge-nick named "The Mighty Mac" (fortunately, I had no problem discerning the difference between a bridge and an ice breaker, so confusion was avoided), saw a lighthouse (there are 116 on the Michigan Coast, most or all in some form of renovation/restoration), and fed a roll of Ritz crackers to the seagulls. Man, they go ape shit when someone feeds them-total alpha male battleground. By the end of the roll I had them snatching crackers out of my fingers (a little scary as they don't look like they have a weak bite) and doing Immlen roles to beat the next gull in an air interception. Fun!

Wednesday 6/26 headed over "The Mighty Mac" (not the ice breaker-that would have hurt) into the You Pee. Went directly North to the Soo Locks in Sault Saint Marie, and took the two hour boat tour through the American locks into Lake Superior, then back through the Canadian locks into Lake Huron. Comfy and interesting. Took a nice pair of back roads (28 and 123) to the Tahquamenon State Park and walked out the path to see the upper falls. A pittance compared to Niagara Falls, but located in a much more rural and scenic setting. Interesting aspect was the brown color of the water-large amounts of tannic acid from decaying vegetation.

Decided to camp out in the rustic campground along the river, and asked for a site under the trees due to the forecasted rain. OMG!! Remember the Alfred Hitchcock movie "The Birds"? This night was a remake entitled "The Mosquitoes". I'm no neophyte to these annoying bugs, having grown up in Rochester NY. But that was kid stuff compared to this nightmare. They were everywhere and ceaseless in their biting. You walked around in a cloud of bugs. After setting up camp walked over to the "modern" camp for a shower. Thought I would show those bugs a thing or two by putting on long pants and shirt. Stupidly, still wore my sandals. Received about 30 bites on my ankles for my efforts. Didn't itch them and they're almost gone as of this 6/28 writing. Note to self-wear high socks in mosquitoville. Ended up walking around and visiting other sufferers who at least had campfires going (helps scare away the bugs). Apparently this year's weather has been a weird combination of coolness and wetness, producing an historic brood of mosquitos. Fortunately, a breeze picked up (in advance of the rain) at about 11PM and blew the little suckers away; so everyone was able to seal themselves into their tents and get a nice comfortable sleep.

My 35 year old two-man tent remained leak free and I beat feet out of there by 7AM the next morning. Immediately after leaving the riverside campground and getting up to speed, the bug debacle ceased. Ran into a nice little rainstorm which fully cleared the air and made everything fresh and clean. Made my way back over "The Mighty Mac" (bridge again) and headed down the West coast of the mitten, now with Lake Michigan at the side. By the way, Michigan has the best set of criteria for establishing dotted passing lines that I've ever seen. Everywhere else it seems that the dashes are conservatively placed in

order to ensure the safe passing ability of the 95th percentile 80 year old grandma driving a 60's Rambler. Michigan treats you as a rational adult and is amazingly liberal in terms of where they authorize passing (clearly marked with roadside signs as well as dashed and solid lines). Needless to say, passing any other vehicle with the cobra is a trivial matter. Almost as trivial as with my R1 motorcycle, but not quite.

Set up camp at the State Park at Traverse City, then took several hours to drive up the M22 to the Northport Lighthouse and down the other M22 (they make an isosceles triangle) to take a scenic drive through the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Park. Holy Moly-these dunes need to be seen to be believed. You can search the internet for images but these 2D pics don't come close to doing them justice (just checked). I haven't mentioned it yet but virtually everyone I meet asks me one of two questions (and you know what's coming). Non car people ask "what kind of car is that?" Car people ask me "real or kit?" I've been asked the latter 67 times (I'm serious, am keeping count for my amusement). I'm universally polite and friendly in my responses, while internally thinking "do you really think there's anyone out there driving their million dollar 60's Shelby AC Cobras down dirt roads, crusty with bugs and plastered with aerodynamically formed dirt trails due to the multiple rain squalls encountered, stuffed to the max with camping gear and parked in the budget zone?" Nevertheless, the car is ALWAYS a conversation starter and has led to a great number of friendly talks with strangers. "You meet the nicest people in an FFR Cobra"-hey, someone ought to run with that tagline!

This morning 6/28, took forum member Steno's advice (thanks!) and headed over to the cute little seaside town of Frankfort, went a mile down the road to Elberta for a great breakfast, then headed down the M22 past Arcadia along a very nice road full of turns and elevation changes. Ran across another stunning seaside cliff view at an overlook just above Arcadia. "Wow!!" is all I can say. By the way, check out ffcars updates and Factory Five's Facebook page for pics and hopefully vids on the latter (will try and put some on the dropbox tonight, and it will probably take Mad Dog a few days to post, given the weekend).

Anyhow, the rest of the day was simply a 200 mile transit trip inland to Howell. On the way, saw a beautiful collection of clouds off to my side, containing brilliant white towering clouds of different types, along with huge masses of black. You guessed it, they chased me all the way into Howell as the road jinked north and south, catching me about four times in short duration squalls. As it has been so far in this trip, nothing lasted long enough to be uncomfortable and I didn't bother stopping to put on rain gear. Arrived at Howell fully dry and checked into one of those motels that might have been nice four decades and three owners ago (the pool's an empty "see-ment" pond). It was 'featured' in one of those coupon newspaper booklets you pick up at state welcome centers. But, it's cheap, has a bed and free Wi-Fi (hence am filing this report tonight). No sense in spending money when that's all I need.

Now have approximately 3000 miles under my belt for this meandering trip (uh-oh, I think I need to up my 8000 mile estimate to something much bigger). Nothing but fun so far and no mechanicals. Weather has been relatively mild other than for several days of scorching heat. Hoping that continues as long as possible. Until the next report, TTFN.