

Days 16-19

Left the build school in Howell shortly after 12:30PM. Uneventful drive to the outer Chicago area. Once again was fortunate to have relatively benign weather. It was generally cloudy with periods of sun and then periods of 'not sun'. Some of the 'not sun' turned into 'not unrainy'. The interesting part was that the interstate kept bending and turning, so I'd see a black mass clouds off to the side and then we'd turn and be heading right for it. This cat and mouse game continued for about an hour without any resulting rain, but then the game came to its inevitable conclusion and the skies opened up. However, not to sound like a broken record but I just drove through it getting mildly wet in the hands and left thigh (blow by and windshield runoff) w/o bothering to stop to put on rain gear. As always, the rain stopped, the sky cleared up, and had a very nice balmy and sunny conclusion to the drive. Ended up in the Aurora, Illinois region ("Wayne's World, Wayne's World; Excellent, Whooooo....."). Since it looked like it could rain that evening, wimped out and stayed in a hotel that evening. This was a Red Roof in (another rest area coupon type), was no more expensive than "the Kensington" in Howell, and was many times better-newish and perfectly clean.

After checking in, went out to gas up the car. While doing so, a sweet older woman drove up and started to chat. Turns out that back in the 60's in California, one of her girlfriends had an early Cobra, so she recognized what I was driving. She went on to inform me that she had moved from her beloved San Diego to Tennessee, which she hated. "Why", I asked, "the countryside and roads are so pretty there". She answered with one word: "chiggers!" Having experienced mosquitoville, I can somewhat empathize. We then spent about 15 minutes where I showed her how to turn the volume up on her rental car radio, and then figured out directions to the country western music concert she was on her way to (she had numerous notes and addresses scrawled over envelopes and scraps of paper). Very amusing interlude.

The next morning, headed out to the nearby airport hangar where Chris (CCRSAC) has his man cave. Nicely sized workspace, and a fantastic setting-all kinds of neat airplanes parked, taxiing, and flying by. He has a late model Mk 3.1 roadster he's been working on, which is immaculate. Not a single scratch on any of the aluminum panels, and numerous period correct modifications (including custom "Ford" labeling). Chris is a perfectionist. Towards the end of my three hour long one hour stop-and-go, Sten (steno) showed up with his beautiful roadster. Gleaming metal flake paint, polished aluminum in the engine bay, and it's a regularly used high mileage car. Chris's dad showed up, and snapped a few pics of us three. Notice the raw, unfinished early Kirkham in the rear of the garage. Not Chris's, just being stored there, and neat to look at the aluminum body. All-in-all, an outstanding and very pleasant morning.

Off to Philo to visit Thomas Payne and his restored garage, by way of back roads and a piece of route 66. While cruising along at 60mph in a 55mph zone, middle of nowhere, came up on a car going 50mph. A quick burst of the throttle shot me past him and back into my lane. The dot on the horizon turned into a county sheriff, who pulled a U-turn and in that annoyingly polite robotic manner, dispensed a speeding ticket for 79mph. He was a young kid, unwilling to engage in any conversation, and no slack shown. Pointless ticket in terms of protecting the public safety, but I understand the need for tax revenue and fulfilling quotas (Illinois is near bankruptcy). In any event, I had "earned" 100s of tickets so far on the trip already, so am still far ahead.

Found remnants of route 66 paralleling interstate 55. Saw a few replica series of Burma Shave signs, as well as many dilapidated structures that had seen much better days. It was neat to experience the

whole gestalt of 'the mother road'. More back roads and ran across an array of modern windmills spread across farmland in the middle of nowhere. Huge structures and plenty of them. Wanted to stop for a picture but was feeling guilty about being hours late for my visit with Tom.

Got to Tom's place and it was so cool to see in person all those things previously seen on the Garage Journal thread. Beautiful location, great piece of property, excellent restoration of buildings and equipment, cool cars, and great people. Tom's lovely wife Chris showed up, we continued chatting, and I then got invited for dinner back at the house. Their house is a century old, is accompanied by several other buildings on the property (one of which houses Chris's multiple award winning Lincoln Mk VIII), and has a wraparound porch and a woodworking shop in the basement (and has a continuation of one of the shop's themes: seemingly an air compressor and a Snap-On tool box in every room-LOL). They also built a super cool Japanese style waterfall rock pond with poi (big gold fish). Perfect. Had an all American dinner, which was leftovers from a picnic Tom and Chis had hosted for a bunch of Corvette guys as part of that weekend's annual Bloomington Corvette show. So, twice in one day, my planned one hour stop-and-go had turned into an incredibly enjoyable 3 hour interlude. As Tom said, these kinds of serendipitous "slice of life" episodes are what makes it all worth it.

Took off at 8pm to put a dent in my 400+ mile trek to Lawrence Kansas to join my family for a week at the in-laws on Lake Dabinaw. Drove until about 10:30, my first night time driving on the trip, and finally stopped when the frequency of insect implosion on my windshield and the consequential loss of visibility dictated it was time to call it a day. Pulled off the highway and negotiated with the hotel clerk to get a rate reduction from \$69 down to \$59 for the night. 10\$ savings at 4\$/gallon and 20 miles/gallon gets me 50 miles further down the road. WhooHoooo....Score!

After yet another perfectly comfortable day of driving in blue skies with wisps of clouds and moderate temperatures, and a stop in Hannibal MO after crossing 'the Mighty Mississippi' (we sure have a lot of 'mighty' stuff in this country) to see the Mark Twain oriented paraphernalia, arrived at the lake. It's going to be a nice break after two and a half weeks of being a vagabond.

Now have spent a day and a half relaxing, chatting with extended in-law family and neighbors, eating, jogging, boating, and swimming. Yesterday, spent an hour washing the encrusted bugs off the car and it's pretty again. Have now accrued a little over 4000 miles on the trip and got my first mechanical: the bumpy ride on route 66 appears to have disturbed the circuit to my flasher relay, so I have to manually toggle my turn signals. Hope to find another bump that reverses the problem!

Until next week, TTFN