

Days 20-25

Spent a total of 4 days with family and friends; boating, swimming, jogging, and eating. Very nice time but on the last day I found myself ready to get back into the itinerant exploratory mode that I'm now accustomed to. Took off Saturday morning in nice partly cloudy and cool conditions, taking back roads for a while before intersecting the interstate. The clouds evaporated into a clear blue sky and I baked. Once again, saved by the goofy hat (my brother has now named me "Sir Rick of Wisconsin" after Sir Lawrence of Arabia).

Serendipity # 1: While approaching Des Moines saw a huge number of hot rods on the road. Finally pulled into a rest area and did a google search to find that Goodguys was holding "The Heartland Nationals" show at the State Fairgrounds just 12 miles from where I was at that very moment. SHWING! 20 minutes later I was pulling into the parking lot. Holy cow: thousands of rolling works of art. Also saw two cobra replicas-one was on display from some manufacturer (427 Performance?) which looked nice and polished and finished, with a square tube frame; the other a Midstates slowly driving in the midst of the internal fairgrounds traffic jam. It looked very nice and clean, but had a ride height that I'd estimate at 6 or 7" and consequently looked a little "different" to my eyes. Spent several hours mentally overloading on one beautiful hot rod or muscle car after another, ranging from rat rods to concourse winners. There are sure a lot of mint muscle cars in the Midwest. At some point, I just couldn't absorb any more- must be like visiting the Louvre and after a while coming across the Mona Lisa and thinking "ho hum-snore". Excellent unintended foray!

Serendipity # 2: Due to having baked all day, wanted a cold shower and air conditioning for the night so wimped out again and opened up the handy welcome center coupon book. Found a cheapo inn located down the road in Cedar Rapids. Apple maps directed me off the freeway directly into downtown, and I thought "uh oh". Fortunately, was further directed 4 miles out into the burbs, off the beaten path to an acceptable spot. As an aside, from my afternoon visit to the State Fairgrounds for the Goodguys show and my sojourn that evening, it appears that Iowa is experiencing an obesity epidemic. There must be a lot of calories in corn. Yikes! Anyhow, the next morning, I chose route 3 of the 3 Apple maps choices to stay on non-interstates. While driving along route 151 past Anamosa Iowa saw a big sign for the "National Motorcycle Museum". Immediate U-Turn to go to one of the items on my planned itinerary, which I hadn't checked in days and thus would have missed if not for my lucky choice of hotel and routes. THE best museum I've ever seen, in terms of layout, presentation, and selection, given its subject matter. For a motorcyclist interested in the history, sheer nirvana. Once again, after several hours and the resulting mental overload, left as a very satisfied visitor. Highly recommended!

Got a lot of "what kind of car is that?" questions on this trip segment, along with a number of suggested spots to visit. Based on that input and the "ten pounds of stuff in a five pound bag" syndrome mentioned at the beginning of this thread, have decided to forego a second visit to the Oshkosh EAA Airventure in order to use that week for other first time must-dos and still try and get to Laguna Seca for the Pebble Beach Concourse and vintage races in mid - August. In the neighborhood of Monticello Iowa, there were segments on route 151 that had a 360 degree horizon to horizon view of nothing but undulating landscape covered in cornfields, with an occasional farm and associated silos. Breathtakingly beautiful.

While in Wisconsin, ran into Peter Egan, world renowned writer/humorist for both "Cycle World" and "Road&Track", who I've been reading since back in the 70s. Ok, Ok, I didn't just run into him,

I stalked him (man love has its darker side). Found his address in the white pages and drove out to his farmhouse in the boonies, merely hoping to get a picture of mecca as a drive by. He heard the rumble as I pulled up in his driveway (nothing ventured, nothing gained!), came out for a looksee and proceeded to give me a couple of hours of his time. Offered a cup of coffee and we just chatted out in his garage about bikes and cars. His lovely wife Barb showed up, having just returned from picking cherries. And yes, Peter is just as gracious and friendly as you'd expect of someone with friends wherever he goes. Took him for a ride and then virtually forced him to get in the driver's seat, overcoming his initial polite refusal (I let all my friends drive it-these cars are as strong as the steel they're made of and anything can be fixed; besides its simple golden rule stuff and I know I'd be thrilled if the shoe was on the other foot). Peter commented how easy and comfortable it is to drive (I think that as long time long distance motorcyclists, we both have a different perspective than others on traveling comfort-for me, a 400 mile drive in this thing is like sitting on the living room couch, relatively speaking). Not wanting to wear out my welcome, I dismissed myself, letting him get back to work. What another awesome, memorable experience (the hits just keep on coming)!

Will be just hanging with my brother for the next several days, and then we'll head north for some camping. Given the heat, humidity, and high level of mosquitoes in this neck of the woods (again!?), we'll probably take his air conditioned Camry for that venture. The following Saturday night and Sunday we'll be at Road America for the vintage races, at which time I plan on taking a charity lap around the course if offered during lunchtime. Thereafter, I'll be hitting the road for the Dakotas. 4700 miles in now. Until the next time.....