

Days 26-38

Spent the middle of the week hanging out at my brother Gordy's house in Madison, getting a 3+ mile jog in every morning. Fixed the long broken (6 months) stereo system in his place by spending 3 minutes looking at it and seeing that the turntable was unplugged underneath the shelving, which was causing feedback when the receiver was set to "auxiliary" and precluding the playing of an extensive classical record collection. Notwithstanding that I've built my own car, THIS certified me as an official "mechanical wizard" by local reckoning.

Also spent an afternoon at Barnes & Noble catching up on all the car/motorcycle/airplane magazines, and another ensuring that the Camry was suitable for a camping trip (checking oil/fluid/tire pressure levels, replacing a slashed spare tire, and performing an extensive washing/interior and trunk cleaning/vacuuming session). The car was no longer an experimental petri dish engaged in growing an exotic crop of exotic organisms.

Gordy and I attended the weekly summer Wednesday evening concert on the grass at the central square on the grounds of the Madison state capital building. This concert featured a world famous (there's such a thing?) harmonica player, backed by the local chamber orchestra, and was held under perfect skies and weather. Great ambiance-very pleasant.

I did take the Cobra on a 60 mile drive out in the country, to a cute little town named Spring Green along with the neighboring Tower Hill State Park on the Wisconsin River. The latter turned out to be a Reader's Digest (i.e. condensed) version of mosquitoville, so the visit was extremely short!

On Friday July 12th, we took off heading north. Spent a day in the Wisconsin Dells exploring kitchville (it is a small version of Pigeon Forge Tennessee, if you've ever seen that), with the highlights being a land/river tour in a WWII vintage "Duck" amphibious truck and an excellent dinner at a German restaurant. We camped out in a great campsite, made a nice fire, and went for a nice swim in the lake-like Wisconsin River the following morning after my run through the campgrounds.

That day we headed up into the beautiful Door County peninsula for the weekend. On the way, we stopped in Montello, one of the many quaint little Wisconsin towns, for a cup of coffee. While sitting on a bench sipping, I spotted an old building with a cornerstone labeled "IOOF 1886". Looked it up on Google to see that it stood for "The International Organization of Odd Fellows" (excellent name!), which turns out to be a fellowship and philanthropic organization based in England, and was the first of these types of organizations (Elks, Rotary, Kiwanis...) to include women members. Good for them.

Later on, we stopped in Green Bay to visit the hallowed Lambeau field, home of the Packers. I'm no stick and ball sports fan, so it meant absolutely nada to me, but everyone else was treating it as a visit to the Vatican, with the late Vince Lombardi being the sainted ex pope. Gordy wanted to show me the exalted playing field, but it turns out you can't see a single blade of grass w/o paying for a tour (apparently they've got to maximize every cent of the revenue stream in order to afford the players). So, seeing one of the many ongoing tour groups wandering around with a guide, we joined at the back of the pack. We were immediately approached by the rear guard action, who asked us if we wanted to take a tour. I politely answered that "it appeared we are already on one". He asked for our tickets, to which I responded "naah, they cost money". He chuckled and observed "well, no fault in trying". We left him and the rear part of the tour group laughing. My brother gets a kick out of my wisenheimer shtick, so I

feel compelled to play to his needs. We also followed directions to a memorial for deceased motorcycle riders. This contained a large number of memorial bricks, not surprising seeing the scarcity of helmeted riders in Wisconsin and the gaggle of Harley Davidsons parked at every bar and pub.

We ended up in Egg Harbor for the night at the quaint old world Alpine Resort, built in the 20s. We had perfect weather and gorgeous views of the sunset over Lake Michigan. After empowering the young girl at the desk with the ability to offer discounts, to no avail, it took going to two levels of management to secure a waterside room for the price of a "cheap seats" non-view room, thereby saving \$30. My brother enjoys seeing me play this game, so once again I endeavored to please. We had dinner at Mojo Rosas Mexican restaurant. I lived in Los Angeles for 17 years and ever since then Mexican food has been my most frequent dine out choice, so have probably eaten it at least 1000 times. This was THE worst Mexican food I've ever had, lacking any spice at all (the red sauce on my burrito was essentially marinara sauce). My brother's flautas was equally unpleasant. On the other hand, the service was abysmally slow and the price was inflated, so at least we got the trifecta. A "must miss" for anyone in the area! The next morning, had a fantastic run through some of the Alpine Country Club golf course and the tree covered residential peninsula, with some roads paved and others gravel covered. Lovely homes on the water and a great place to jog. After a nice breakfast at the resort, we hit the road.

Went a little ways up the road to the more touristy, but nice, town of Fish Creek, and spent 4 hours in Peninsula State Park, a relatively large and completely tree covered area. We climbed the very high Eagle's Tower for a great view, and hiked the Eagle's Trail, marked "very difficult". This trail was fun, but very rocky, root covered, and involved significant elevation changes. Surprisingly, we saw a number of young women hiking in flip flops, some in bikinis. Not that we minded the latter, but the former is a silly recipe for a broken ankle. After the hot and humid hike, we cooled off with a very pleasant swim at the sandy beach area. Leaving the park, we headed up to the tip of the peninsula at Northport. On the way, we stopped at a hamburger joint in Ephraim, the prettiest town we saw in the entire Door County. There was a restaurant in the area, famous for its grass covered roof whereupon two goats live, happily eating it. We ended up camping at a nice little campground in Bailey's Harbor for the evening.

On Sunday, we headed down to Whitefish Dunes State Park, where Gordy remembered an expansive sandy beach from years ago. We were a little early, but surprisingly were one of only five cars in the parking lot. We found out why when we got to the beach. It is no longer deep, but only about 10 yards wide. More importantly, it stunk to high heaven of dead fish. There was a large display explaining why: in 1947 a small fish called the alewife invaded Lake Michigan from the Atlantic Ocean. The alewife is predominantly a salt water fish used to a stable environment. The spring runoff causes quick changes in temperature and water chemistry in the great lakes, the alewives can't handle it, and they end up piled on the shore. Given the stench, our planned day at the beach turned into a half hour reconnaissance and we beat feet out of there. Several hours later, we were back in Madison after a total trip of about 650 miles.

The following week was again spent hanging out in Madison, in the midst of a sustained heat wave. My brother and I spent a comfortable afternoon at Devil's Lake, fixed a leaky exhaust pipe on the Camry, hung out at Barnes & Noble for another afternoon, entertained some neighbors for after dinner drinks, and attended another evening concert on the square; this one consisting of Elton John tunes. Nice.

A flurry of emails resulted in arranging a planned meet-up at the forthcoming weekend's Road America event between Peter and Barb Egan, Thomas and Chris Payne (Restored 30s Garage), and my brother

and I. More time on the laptop and telephone resulted in a refinement of my near term trip planning and the confirmed meet-up (AKA leaching off of) a number of long lost friends, arranging a time for my wife Constance to meet up with me for a week in the Southwest (not to be spent in the Cobra!), acquisition of several Target Shelby T-shirts (one for my buddy and fellow car builder PJ Davis), and learning that my wife, in her aerospace executive role, was heading off to England for a few days to attend the Royal Air Force Air Tattoo and associated formal dinners (damn her-she should be sitting home pining for me in my absence!). Lastly, received a Facebook message that my friend and former "day-wife" Jennifer (we worked closely together during the last decade prior to my retirement) was planning on visiting family in Santa Barbara and wondered if she could join me for the drive down the California coast. The result is that she's going to fly into Monterey and attend the Laguna Seca vintage races and Pebble Beach Concourse d'Elegance with me, before the drive down towards L.A. on the Pacific Coast Highway. This will be fun, as she's a great traveling companion. As a necessity, I'll be shipping a bunch of my travel gear ahead to L.A. to make room for her in the passenger compartment. Forum member Rick (CRZN 427) has offered a place to spend the night in Morro Bay on the way down, with a choice of one or two bedrooms, "depending on the nature of your relationship with the accompanying co-worker". I'll have to check with my wife to get her input before answering him. LOL!! All of the above highlighted the fact that in this age of Wi-Fi, laptops, and smartphones, we are just a few cheap electrons away from family and friends, no matter where in the world we or they are. Amazing times.

On Friday 7/19 Gordy and I took off for Elkhart Lake to attend the annual Road America vintage race extravaganza. It's a very quaint and pretty little town with the usual shops and cafes, plus several large resorts. On race weekend Fridays for this event, they have an evening concourse for the race cars, who make the several mile trek from the race track on the public roads, and park on the tree lined streets near the resort area. Town folk and race weekend attendees are lined up on the sidewalk to see the spectacle of their arrival, and then get to mingle around them for several hours, before the cars fire up and blast out of there on their way back to the track. Major cool. We met up with Thomas, Chris, and their drag racing friend John (former GM Powertrain engineer, now working in the heavy appliance industry), then found and chatted with Peter Egan for a bit (still super friendly and gracious), then wandered among the race cars. Good times! That night, Gordy and I headed for a state park campground (and just missed a deer leaping across the road in the darkness), but were turned away in the absence of any vacancies. Uh oh. Were directed to another park 20 miles away who had one open site left, but when we arrived there at 9:55 we found a closed office (was supposed to be open to 10:00). Fortunately, we had spotted a motel a mile back in Belgium WI, so gave up the camping plan and called it a night.

Saturday morning was bright and sunny, so jogged off to the east and as I crested a hill found a stunning view of glistening Lake Michigan disappearing over the horizon. Nice jog to and along the beach, returning to the hotel through the Harrington Beach State Park. Gordy and I then drove back to the beach for a little sand and sun, then hit the road to get a delicious and decadent breakfast at a pancake joint. We spent the afternoon in Elkhart Lake again, where my car was parked on the street near the area set aside for that evening's street car concourse-the car got a huge amount of attention (whenever we had it in sight while we wandered around town, it was usually attended by one or more gawkers). If we ever had to retrieve anything from the trunk, got the usual questions and benefitted from the usual friendly conversations. Thomas, Chris, and John met up with us again and we wandered through this

evening's cars (which we didn't appreciate as nearly as much as the prior night's race cars). After a number of texts and voicemails, successfully met up with fellow forum member Tom (Cheapsnake), his wife Sandy, and their friends and family. We had a nice chat, before agreeing to meet up at Sunday's races. As we left town in the raucous Cobra (OK, OK - FFR Mark 4 Roadster), all eyes were on us. Chinese food with the Philo Illinois crowd and a hotel completed our day.

Sunday dawned a little cooler and cloudy. We headed over to the track early, signed up for the lunchtime lap tour session, and then wandered around the paddock and track while the various vintage classes did their morning warm-ups. The lunchtime track tour was excellent. We got 40 minutes of track time, at one point getting up to about 100 mph. My completely non motor head brother had never been on a racetrack before and for him it was a total thrill. It would have been even better if our pace car had been a little more forceful in passing the slower cars, but it was still a blast. A spectator came up to me later and informed me that my car was the loudest one on the track, by far (big surprise to all of us FFR guys-not). Enjoyed the Can-AM, Corvette 60th Anniversary, and other races; hung out with Tom (Cheapsnake) and Sandy for a bit (including a photo-op), and said our good-byes to Thomas and Chris, just as the sky started spitting. Got caught in a heavy and sustained rainstorm on the way back to Madison, the heaviest of the trip, and got kind of soaked (the inside of the windshield, dash top, and instrument panel were dripping wet). Halfway back, pulled into a gas station with covered pumps to take a break, and was informed by a fellow traveler that the way ahead had hail, traffic pulling off the road due to visibility conditions, and a 20 mph travel speed. Yikes! Then another young guy came up and invited us to hang out in his auto shop 2 blocks away to wait out the storm. We took him up on it for about a half hour, then decided to bite the bullet and continue on. Experienced another half hour of heavy rain before, as always, the sky cleared and the rain stopped. By the time we pulled into Gordy's place, the outside of the car was fully dry, but the carpets will have to be vacuumed at the gas station before I take off to the west. Great two week sojourn hanging with my bro' and going on joint adventures! Just like when we were kids.

Tomorrow morning will be heading up to Hatton, ND to visit a former co-worker for a few days, then on to Sturgis after passing through New Salem (home of "Salem Sue, the World's Largest Holstein Cow"- Garry Bopp, will you be there this Thursday or Friday, or am I a week too early?), then on to Mt. Rushmore, the Crazy Horse Memorial, Devil's Tower, Yellowstone Park by way of Beartooth Highway, Glacier National Park by way of Going-to-the-Sun Road, and then if all goes well will end up on an Island off the coast of Seattle sometime within the first week of August. That's about 2600 miles in one sentence, which will push me well over 8000 miles accumulated on the trip by then. Looks like an awesome set of sights are in my future, and I'll keep you apprised of them periodically. Until the next time.....