

Homeward Bound

Subject: Keys, cane, and a sunken boat.

Date: Thu, 09 Mar 2000 17:47:00

After leaving Key West we headed back to Key Largo for a little shopping, mostly for boating or dive stuff. Across from the campground was a boat store, a dive equipment place and a place that sells shells. We enjoyed looking at the diving and the boat stuff but the shell place really bothered us. We didn't even make it inside, the front is covered with coral that has been harvested live with what looked like significant care in order to protect the fragile beauty. They also had a number of conch shells that were small enough to be illegal if harvested in places we have been in the Caribbean. Kent told us that a lot of this stuff would be illegal to harvest in the states but is legal to import and resell. It's ok to destroy the reefs of the rest of the world but not ours. We have seen many of the corals they had for sale in the wild and were struck by their beauty. I look at a piece of coral and can imagine it's beauty in life. Just like a beautiful woman is a joy to behold, no matter how beautiful coral was in life, when they are dead the stark white beauty is just a corpse.

We left the next day and headed inland up through the center of Florida to visit a campground on the shores of Lake Okeechobee. We were surprised at the amount of sugar cane we encountered. They were in the process of harvesting many fields of cane as we drove along. The size of the fields amazed us. It was really neat for us to see them, we haven't seen a live field of cane since St. Kitts.

We were driving along thousands of acres of flat land covered with cane, roads, or buildings and turned the corner to go to the park at the edge of the lake. As soon as we crested the levee all we could see was lake all the way to the horizon. We all gasped at once. Lake Okeechobee is a large lake averaging only about 10 feet deep with flood control bringing it to 12. We did a short walk around the park and down to the marina. A number of the boats in the marina are in pretty hard shape and didn't look like they received a lot of care. One in particular seemed to be a little worse than the rest, it sank and was still resting on the bottom with only its mast and standing rigging above water. Sad to see. We had a spectacular sunset with clouds on the horizon, we couldn't see if there was a green flash.



Subject: Highlands Hammock, the CCC, Citrus, and the Tampa Airport.

Date: Thu, 09 Mar 2000 21:53:43

We had a nice day travelling through large scale citrus groves and looking for one of the state parks about a hundred miles from Tampa.

The Civilian Conservation Corps Museum at the Highlands Hammock State park is one of the best we have seen on the CCC. After seeing an awful lot of stuff done by the CCC across the states, it was really interesting to us. The CCC operated from 1933 to 1942 and was created to provide young men and some women with work revitalizing the nation's natural resources. Camps were run by military

personnel with local experienced men to supervise the crews. The men enlisted for six months with an option for another 18, they were given room, food and clothes as well as a \$30 per month salary, \$25 of which was sent home. The origin of "Another day, another dollar".

Training was an important option for the men and they could use up to 10 hours a week for educational and vocational training.

One plaque really got our attention the "fact sheet" here are a few of our selected favourites



- Duration of program: April 5 1933 to June 30 1942
- Nicknames (there were several but we liked:) Roosevelt's Tree Army, Colossal College of Callouses
- Average age 18 to 19 and 147 pounds
- Average weight gain in first 3 months 11.5 pounds.
- Famous Actor in CCC: Raymond Burr
- Number of illiterate enrollees taught to read: over 40,000
- Average number of camps per year in the US 1643 total of 4500
- Highest camp 9200 feet in Colorado lowest -270 in Death Valley
- approximate cost per enrollee per year \$1000
- Miles of roads built 125000
- Miles of telephone lines 89000
- Miles of foot trails 13100
- Number of people directly benefiting from enrollee's checks 12-15 million
- Farmland benefiting from erosion control 40 million acres
- Trees planted between 2 and 3 billion
- Unofficial motto "We can take it"

We also had a chance to do a number of the walking trails which included places where there were wild orange and greatfruit trees. We tried one of the oranges, correction, I tried one of the oranges, the pucker I had after a taste scared the rest of them off. They were smart, shall I say the oranges were a bit tart. The wild orange shakes at the concession stand were much better.

We have really liked having lots of fresh fruit on board: strawberries, oranges, and greatfruit. The next day we were late leaving and headed slowly toward Tampa. We stopped at Camping World to try and get Kent a digital voltmeter like ours but they were sold out. We will get him one on the way up the coast. We spent the rest of the day in one of the malls on the way to the airport. Kent and Michelle are scheduled to leave at 7 a.m. so we spent the night in the airport high vehicle area, as far as airports go Tampa ranks pretty high with us. It is well laid out and easy to get around even for big rigs.

Subject: Cocoa Beach and the Kennedy Space Center

Date: Sun, 12 Mar 2000 19:31:52

After leaving Tampa airport we went to visit with a friend of ours, Tom and Rindy Austin, who own a timeshare at Cocoa Beach. After landing at a campground nearby we looked at the time and it was long

before we normally start the day. We relaxed for a bit and then called Tom who was keen on coming to get us for the day. So before long we were visiting with friends and having a great day walking the beach, swimming, and having a great time. After dinner we headed over to Ron Jon's Surf Shop a famous spot for picking up T-Shirts, swimsuits, and surf boards.

The next day we were interested in visiting the Kennedy Space Center, Tom and Rindy and friends were too. So nine of us landed at the KSC. It had changed a lot since Tom was there several years ago. It was our first time visiting so we did lots of rubber necking.

One of the first things you see as you near the Kennedy Space Center (KSC) is the vehicle assembly building or VAB. This place is full of TLAs(three letter acronyms). The VAB is huge it was originally built to assemble the Saturn V rockets that took man to the moon. It was built to be able to assemble four at a time. It covers 8 acres and is 535 feet tall and has a foundation that extends 160 feet into the ground. When you punch a foundation that deep in Florida you end up in salt water. Quick test! What happens when you put dissimilar metals in an electrolyte(salt water). Ok to make it fair boaters can't answer, we fight this problem all of the time: Electrolysis. The VAB not only being the biggest building in the world at the time it was built, it was also the worlds largest wet cell battery. They had to do some additional grounding to correct the problem. They had some neat ideas on how they were going to move stuff around (several million pounds for a Saturn V). One early concept planned on using the intracoastal waterway to float rockets to the pad, but a crawler designed won out. The VAB is a tall structure and requires ventilators to prevent clouds and rain forming inside the building.

The crawlers used to deliver Shuttles to the launch pad are the same ones that did the Apollo missions. These are huge tracked vehicles and have a large pair of tracks at each corner. The width of the vehicle is about the same as a four lane highway including the median. It weighs about six million pounds (each cleat weighs 2000 lbs) and has a load capacity of 12 million pounds. It has a top speed when loaded of one mph, when unloaded two, but what do you expect from an electric motor drive. It has diesels on board to generate power.

We spent a lot of time looking around the Saturn V building. We could easily spend a day there just looking at it. They have a real Smithsonian Exhibit quality Saturn V rocket, as well as a 3.7 billion year old lunar rock sample you can touch (smooth as glass if your interested). It is older than 99.99% of the surface of the earth. The building has a launch theatre and a lunar theatre where a full sized shuttle lands on the "moon" in front of you. We really liked the launch theatre. The equipment in the theatre was the actual equipment used to launch the rockets and they take you through the final 3 minutes of a launch highlighting each station as they checked in. The doors opened to the business end of a Saturn V.



Tom says they used to let you get a lot closer to the launch pads but now you are back at the observation gantry. We couldn't see much but superstructures, there weren't any shuttles hanging around. The other building we liked was the International Space Station Center. They have mockups of real pieces of the station as well as an observation deck where you could see them preparing the real thing.

At the Observation Gantry they have a shuttle main engine on display it was used in 15 launches on three different shuttles including one that launched Sally Ride into space. It had an operational life of 78 firings before being retired.

All in all a pretty neat day.

Subject: One last day in Florida and into Georgia

Date: Sun, 12 Mar 2000 20:19:45

We really didn't have a plan on a route home when we left Cocoa Beach so we picked a park on the coast of Florida and figured we'd figure it out from there. We didn't really have a lot to see on our list. We had a bunch of things on the coast but since we will be going down the coast on a slow boat we figured we would take our time to visit then or on the way back up the coast. There were a few things in the interior that interested us but we are both suffering a little time-to-get-home-itus. We did a route plan that with no layover days put us into my brother's place at the beginning of April. This is probably not a bad plan because we will probably spend a few days here and there and be the end of the first week before we reach John's and after a week there we will head home for the end of the second week of April.

We have had great luck with Georgia State Parks they are very pretty, well maintained and not packed like the Florida Parks. The second day out we had a rude awakening with a passing cold front, a few thundershowers and a sudden 30 degree drop in temperature. Last of shorts and T-shirt weather until June. The NOAA has a new computer generated voice reading the weather. It sounds just like the "Marvin" voice on the Macintosh computers Bonnie worked on and I used most of the time at home. "Marvin" was the depressed computer in the Douglas Adams Trilogy. Marvin brought us depressing news "Frost Warning".

We are heading through the interior of Georgia before doing a bit of a backtrack to pick up the Savannah River Scenic Highway in South Carolina before turning back north to North Carolina then west to Nashville TN, the Mammoth Caves in Kentucky. If weather permits a quick nip into Indiana and then back to West Virginia, Virginia, ... (eleven states in 20 days).

We hit a neat point in our spreadsheet when we added today's information we could see the year totals for the trip. The end of march marks one year since we picked up Millie. Our average gas mileage over almost one year (just shy of 15000 liters of fuel) 9.07 mpg. Anybody want to trade gas bills?

Subject: Georgia on my mind (and under foot at the moment)

Date: Tue, 14 Mar 2000 20:09:40

We stopped at Magnolia Springs State Park and picked up a map and state park guide. Things are a lot quieter here than in Florida. We had no problem getting into the park on a weekend. We have seen more tents in the last few days than we have in a long time. I felt really happy to be in Millie when the downpour struck, followed a few moments later by thunder and lightening, and then as the cold front passed a drop in temperature from the low 70s to the low 40s. I was quite happy to be dry and warm inside Millie. We stopped on the way out to look at the fresh water aquarium and the spring that gave Magnolia Springs SP its name. The spring is a constant 72F year round and pumps out 9 million gallons a day. It is inhabited by box turtles and as soon as you appear they come charging across the

water, attacked by a herd of turtles! (Ok so we were several feet above them) We looked at each other and said "They're used to being fed" and they were, the turtle food dispenser was behind us. We lost count at 17 turtles doing circles under our shadows.

We did walk over to the freshwater aquarium next door and did a quick tour of the sports fish found in the Georgia rivers and ponds. Lots of catfish, crayfish, turtles, alligators, and even a couple of snakes. From there we drove over to Hard Labor Creek SP through a little town called Rutledge. The trees that lined the streets were in full blossom. It was extremely pretty. It is definitely spring here everything seems to be in blossom. The elms are not as green as in Florida but are starting to green up. There seems to be splashes of color everywhere.

We made our first amendment to our trip plan and headed further west rather than east. We went to Stone Mountain. I had never heard of it before but there is a Mount Rushmore style carving of the heroes of the Confederacy carved into stone mountain. Jefferson Davis (President of the Confederate States), General Robert E. Lee, and Stonewall Jackson. It is 76 feet tall compared to Rushmore's 60. It is pretty impressive and new too, it was dedicated in 1970. It was stopped and started several times with sometimes decades of waiting. The first artist was Gutzon Borglum, who carved Rushmore. He wanted to do an entire southern army on the face of the mountain. He got as far as carving Lee's face before getting into a fight and leaving to do Mount Rushmore, after blowing up his conceptual scale sculpture. The face he had carved was later removed (blown off) in favor of the new artists version. The carving is the largest high-relief sculpture in the world. (Crazy horse will be bigger when it is done.)



Confederate Soldier Memorial

There were a number of mistakes on the artists scale model.

Davis was the president and should not have been carrying a military hat and the ear of one of the horses looked like a mule not a horse. We couldn't see it until we could stand at a place where we could see both the scale model and the finished version. Sure enough there were differences.

They had lots of information on the Confederacy as well as other attractions at Stone Mountain. Including the Antebellum Plantation, a 732 bell Carillon, a stern wheeler, a skylift to the top of the mountain, a train, and lots more. We did get to see where "Marvin" was broadcasting from, the NOAA has a tower on the top of Stone Mountain.

The place has a lot of interesting bits of information about the Confederacy. Lee was offered command of the union army by Lincoln but choose the Confederate army instead. Kentucky and Missouri have not been readmitted to the union, officially they never left. Splinter groups were recognized by the Confederate States and not by the Union. The Union lists 11 states as seceding and the Confederate count was 13.

Stone Mountain has a laser light show that happens at night during the summer. I guess we get to put Stone Mountain back on the list.

After leaving Stone Mountain we headed for Tallulah Gorge State Park. Tallulah Gorge is the deepest gorge east of the Mississippi at 900 feet deep. It was also a major tourist attraction at the turn of the century. The impressive Tallulah River flowed through the gorge and impressed a group of engineers at the opportunity for hydroelectric power for sale to the growing town of Atlanta. One of the big opponents to the development was Mrs. Helen Dorich Longstreet. She was the wife of a confederate general, General James Longstreet. She spent much of her time defending her husband from people who wanted to blame him for General Lee's mistakes at Gettysburg. She also fought to keep the Tallulah River wild and to get the gorge protected as a state park, the fight bankrupted her. She died in 1995 after the gorge did become a state park in 1993, with a tamed Tallulah River.

The dam took away much of the tourist trade that developed because of the gorge, but the Great Wallendas Karl Wallenda celebrated his 50th anniversary on a highwire by taking a stroll across the gorge, 1000 feet across the gorge, on a highwire, with a couple of headstands along the way.



Tallulah Gorge

Another thing that you might remember is a movie that was filmed in the Tallulah Gorge and area. It starred John Voight and Burt Reynolds, I never saw it but I remember it caused a bit of stir at the time. The movie was Deliverance.

Subject: SC, NC, the Blue Ridge Mountains and 17.5 turns per mile.

Date: Fri, 17 Mar 2000 18:53:25

We are just ticking the states of left and right, or north and south depending on your orientation. We spent a lot of our time heading north in Georgia so that by the time we came out the top we actually had to swing south to catch South Carolina. We will be spending a lot of time on the coast next fall and considering the boat basically moves at the rate of a brisk walk we will probably be very happy to be not repeating anything.

One thing we haven't done a lot of this year has been eating out. But I was tired and wanted something to eat so we pulled into the Boatyard Café. The only thing the place had going for it was that it was open and packed with locals. They were definitely locals, the waitress was on a first name basis with practically everybody. It was a buffet lunch, REAL southern fried chicken, fried green tomatoes, greens, catfish, and lots, lots, more. We didn't eat dinner and really didn't feel like breakfast either. If you can ever find it again, I don't think we can, have the fried chicken, it makes the Colonel look like a Corporal.

As we approached the corner of Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina we started seeing things we haven't seen in a long time, HILLS. The Blue Ridge Mountains actually did look blue as we approached. It might have been the approaching cold front that started a long soaking rain. It rained through most of North Carolina. We were surprised at how commercial Cherokee NC is. The Casino is certainly a focal point but there is lots of other enterprises that are filling the streets and back roads. We

camped at the National Park just outside of town and debated going through the park on 441 into Tennessee, but they had great big signs saying STEEP and WINDY and Trailers not recommended, so we chickened out. This meant we missed Pigeon Forge and it's main attraction, Dollywood, sorry Dolly see ya next time.

NASCAR may have its headquarters in Florida but it has a history in North Carolina. Some of the first generation NASCAR drivers got their training running moonshine in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Route 129 through the hills has our bet as one of the runs. There are stretches of that road that seem just as well banked as any NASCAR circuit, except the speed limit is a lot lower, 20 mph (on the fast ones).

We were lucky and had nearly no traffic in either direction as we worked our way up and down, left and right, through the hills and corners. Whenever it really was convenient to swing a little low into the corners, nobody was around to care. After 15 to 20 miles we actually started to count turns per mile. The first mile we counted 20, the next two miles there were 34, you get the idea. Counting got boring and we did get to a point where we weren't really sure if we wanted to know how many there were. My shoulders were actually getting tired from steering.

When we got out of the worst of the hills, the sun was starting to break through and the view was incredibly pretty. There are lots and lots of whitewater rafting, hiking, fishing, and guiding outfits. The "Apple-latch-in" trail starts here and runs all the way to Maine where it's called the Appalachian Trail. We saw a couple of guys starting out on the trail when we left the campground. They just spent a very cool and wet night, glad it's not me.

We have made our way almost to Nashville, within about 70 miles. We could have made it but we were pushing hard on our 200 mile a day limit. Tomorrow we will be in Nashville and see if we can get into the Grand Ole Opry for the Saturday night show.

Subject: Grand Ole Opry and Nashville.
Date: Sun, 19 Mar 2000 20:28:30

We arrived early in the afternoon and got into a campground just a mile from the Grand Ole Opry and almost next to a Camping World. Kent saw our digital voltmeter that plugs into a cigarette lighter and wanted one, but the Camping World in Tampa didn't have one so we picked it up here. We looked around for more stuff but really didn't have much luck. They had a 2000 watt inverter on for a good price but it is bigger than we wanted and more expensive as well. We are both thinking more and more about the sailing odyssey, but we are still enjoying the road trip. I finished the last book that we got in trade and we have been checking out every opportunity for a book swap, but have not had much success. They don't seem to be nearly as popular here as they are in the west. The selection when you find them doesn't seem to be as good either, most seem to be romance fiction. Bonnie has picked up a couple of books I finished earlier. I have been reading more and more of the Nigel Calder boat books.



We booked ourselves into the Grand Ole Opry. We had a choice of nose-bleed seats for the 6:30 show or good seats on the floor for the 9:30. We took the 9:30 and caught the 6:30 bus over to the show. This gave us lots of time to look at the Museum and then walk over to the Opryland Hotel. The lobby of the hotel is something to see. It has a river composed of the water from 1700 rivers around the states. Maine has a few rivers represented but not the Saint John. You can go on a river boat ride around the lobby. This is definitely not your average lobby. The Las Vegas style fountain show in coloured light is pretty impressive as well. We spent an hour or so looking around, as well as trying to find an ATM which we did eventually find. They also have Ben and Jerry's ice cream stand, but Bonnie wasn't interested(???)

We walked back to the Grand Ole Opry and got our seats. It was pretty impressive. When the curtain goes up on most shows the stage is set and the performances go on. This stage is a working stage. There is practically one song per performer and the band has to leave the stage (untangling their equipment), the next band has to come on and then connect up their gear. The stage hands are constantly coming on and off stage, hooking up stuff and disconnecting. It was really interesting to watch the logistics. The MCs were good at filling in and telling stories. Porter Wagner was really good at working the audience and even when he was not "performing" on stage. He was always there to get the audience to applaud when it was time and controlling the flow. It is a live radio show, complete with commercials for Coke, your Local Lincoln Mercury Dealer, and "Jogging in a Jug". I was surprised at the rapport he had with the audience. As he performed he often posed for pictures (complete with a "Hi" written on the inside of the flap of his costume jacket), he would also shake hands with people who walked up to the front of the stage.

The Grand Ole Opry was an interesting mix of performers, old, new, established, and just starting to get noticed. Some fairly big name acts will show up unannounced. Once Alan Jackson was flying over in his Lear and stopped in for a few numbers. Reba and Vince Gill stopped by after skipping out early on a Christmas party. We are not big fans and don't know the names of performers unless they are real big names getting airplay right now. We had a number of performers that arrived on stage and immediately recognized the songs when they started out. Some would talk about their hits in the 50s and 60s others about their just released debut CD. It was an interesting mix. My stepfather and his family are very musical, and a number of times I caught myself thinking if how much they would enjoy it if they were here.

We arrived home well after midnight. (The show didn't end until midnight.) The next day we had a bus tour heading out at 8:30 so we were a little draggy getting up. We have lucked out in other cities, in that the half day tour would often have a stop downtown where you could get lunch and if you wanted you could spend the afternoon walking around and pick up the bus back to the campground after the afternoon tour had finished. This tour ended at a restaurant just a stone's throw from the campground. It was raining hard so we went back to the campground and tried to nap. Bonnie succeeded, I didn't but I got caught up on some odds and ends, like the journal, while she slept.

The tour stopped at the Ryman Auditorium, it was an interesting place and I wish we had time to do a better tour but we only had a half hour before we had to get back on the bus.

The Ryman Auditorium had a strange start in life. In 1885 Nashville had 90 saloons and 65 churches. Prominent riverboat captain and saloon owner Thomas Ryman and some of the other saloon owners went to a revival to heckle southern evangelist Samuel Jones. Before the end of the night Ryman was one of the converts and vowed that Jones would never have to preach in a tent again. Ryman had pencil sketches in 1887 and completed in 1892. It was originally intended to be for religious purposes only but

with a crushing debt it was unable to operate without other sources of income, the most famous being the Grand Ole Opry.

We drove by a park near the state capitol. They have a 1400 foot granite wall that tells the history of Tennessee. It looked really neat and I would have loved to have spent part of the afternoon looking at it. The next stop was at the Country Music Hall of Fame. It was interesting and we rushed through trying to see stuff. When we first arrived three big busses had just arrived and it was mobbed. They have a bunch of interesting stuff (Elvis' Gold Car and piano), quite a few plaques from the Country Music Hall of fame inductees, costumes from many performers, original handwritten songs as written by songwriters, and a section on the Opry.

We were surprised at size of some of the famous recording studios. Some seemed to be just a big house, others were huge. Some of the things that you learn are quite interesting in a quirky kind of way. This one came when the guide talked about Randy Travis. He wanted to take a year off and spent some time in Hawaii, since he wanted to go riding he had his horses FEDEXed. Apparently FEDEX ships livestock quite regularly. The stuff you learn in odd places. There is a circuit that sees a lot of race horses that travel from North America at the end of the racing season to South America for it's season and then return again for the North American season.

Marvin just told us we have gotten 1/2 to 1 inch of rain, are expecting another inch before morning and has just issued a flash flood warning. We are fairly high and not in any danger. We will have to be careful going north tomorrow.

We did get great news when we picked up email yesterday. Carolyn and Brad, who we visited in Victoria last September have a healthy and happy baby girl, Sara Marie.

Subject: Mammoth Cave, Turkey Vulture self defence, and Woody Woodpecker
Date: Mon, 20 Mar 2000 20:17:48

After leaving Nashville we headed north to Mammoth Caves National Park. We heard about Mammoth from a ranger at Carlsbad Caverns and they sounded pretty interesting. It was only a little over a two hour drive. We arrived just before lunch, so we grabbed a campsite, ate lunch and headed over to the Visitor Center for an afternoon tour. We were surprised that the first cave tour that was not sold out was at 3:45. It didn't seem busy but there were a couple of buses in the yard. We booked ourselves into the Frozen Niagara Tour and ducked into the auditorium to catch a couple of the movies and read the brochures. After the second movie ended we headed out to look around and ran into a ranger collecting people interested in a walking tour to the Green River. It turned out to be an international crowd. There were people from Indiana, England, Ontario, and us.

It was on this tour that we found out some of that strange information that you pick up as well as some stuff you're not sure you really want to know. Woody Woodpecker was



actually fashioned after a Palliated Woodpecker, and the call of the Palliated Woodpecker is similar to Woody's famous call.

They have a Dixon Cave which is now chained off to protect the colony of Indiana Bats that live there. A family of turkey vultures nest inside the fence in the summer and while the nest is never easy to find, there is usually a vulture watching from a limb of the tree nearby. The first level of self defence is for the bird to fluff up a bit and spread its wings and try to look menacing. Turkey Vultures are ranked high on my list of major league ugly birds. In flight they are nice to watch, up close they are just plain ugly. The second level of self defence has raised their ranking in the ugly category. If you don't take the hint and move away, they vomit on you. And if you think about what they feed on, it might have pushed them right to the top of the list!

Mammoth Caves are listed as both a world heritage site and an international biosphere reserve. The caves are the longest cave system in the world at over 350 miles. It is still not completely explored. They have a volunteer group of cavers that are still mapping new areas. They chart another 2 miles a year on average. Geologists estimate that there are probably two to three times the currently mapped area.

Mammoth Caves are 95% dry and have very little decoration. One area that is well decorated is the area called Frozen Niagara. The person that named the areas was from the north and named things to attract the northern tourists. Grand Central Station and Frozen Niagara are a couple of the names. The trip from the ground level entrance to Grand Central Station 250 feet underground is worth the admission price. The staircase is also probably one of the most expensive too, average cost \$3000 per step, full cost \$1,000,000. It is extremely narrow in places and you have to hunch over and look down into a spectacular vertical shafts that seem to fall forever. It really isn't that far but it is black enough to make it look forever.

The CCC worked in the caves to make the paths and build some of the bridges on the outside trails. It is hard to believe the number of times the CCC has shown up in our travels.

The ranger was an entertaining young lady from Kentucky. She came up with some great one liners. She didn't mind if you chewed tobacco in the caves, tobacco was one of Kentucky's prime cash crops and she supported that, you just couldn't spit for the two hours you were in the cave. Stalactites and stalagmites sometimes joined to form a column. They are columns not pillars, a pillar is what she sleeps on at night.

Night night

Subject: Another cave trip and off to Indiana

Date: Tue, 21 Mar 2000 19:26:49

We got up this morning and decided to stick around and do a couple of more cave tours. We vaguely remembered that the first tour was about 9:00 so we arrived just after the only departure for one of the tours. But we did get on the Historic tour and got a chance to see a different 2 miles of underground passages. It is a pretty impressive place with huge rooms that are having some work done on them at the moment.

The Mammoth Caves played a big part in the 1812 war. With the French supply of gunpowder unavailable during the war, Mammoth Cave provided on of the necessary ingredients for the U.S. to make it's own supply of black powder. Salt peter was mined by slaves in the cave where it was shipped north to a plant owned by a Frenchman by the name of Dupont.

There are still a good supply of materials from that time available for viewing. The cave is extremely dry and provides a good environment for preserving artifacts. About 4000 years ago ancient indians did explore into the caves using dried reed torches. This is fairly impressive since they actually explored several miles into the cave. The NPS have also found places where they had removed crystals and other salts. They have also found the odd mummified ancient.

When the caves became unprofitable as a mine, the slaves became the tour guides for the caves. The owner of the slaves encouraged the slaves to be good tour guides by allowing them to keep any tips that came their way. One particularly good guide, Steven Bishop, did eventually gain his freedom and he also spent most of the rest of his free life exploring the cave. Steven Bishop became famous as a great guide and was sought out my many people visiting the cave. He was responsible for mapping many, many miles of the cave and discovering the bottomless pit, huge domes, and lots of others.



Since we couldn't get on the other tour we wanted, we had lunch and figured we would try to make it to the state park outside of Madison Indiana. We had a pretty good trip but were amazed by the number of trucks heading into and out of Louisville Kentucky. It was just a constant stream of big rigs. UPS seemed to be extremely well represented with their double trailer trains. We understood about UPS when we drove by the airport. A great number of the planes we could see were all huge cargo planes with the UPS logo on it's tail.

We did make it to Clifty Falls State Park and settled in to the campground. From here we start heading east again. Indiana is getting a short shift but at least we get to check it off the list.



View from behind the Big Barn

Subject: Madison Indiana and the Kentucky Horse Barns.
Date: Sat, 25 Mar 2000 20:13:15

On our way to the Kentucky Horse Barns we worked our way through Madison Indiana, a neat little town with lots of restored old buildings and nice homes. Madison is on the banks of the Ohio River. The Ohio was running fast and full. We crossed on Route 421 and stayed on it for quite a way. It is a great back road that shows the character of some of the houses, farms, and

businesses. It was the kind of back road we like although a little twistier than normal, it was a nice way to see the Kentucky rural scene. We make a lot better time on the interstate highways but we swear that the interstate system is good for getting you from A to B without showing you anything about where you are. You could go from Houlton Maine to San Diego California and not see a bloody thing.

We arrived at the Kentucky Horse Farm State Park. It is a lot fancier than most of the state parks we have been in. But like last night there is no water at the sites but at least the showers are open here. We both wanted a shower and were thinking about breaking down and having one in the RV but we also were low on water. One of the first times that has happened. We arrived here and rather than head over to the park we relaxed (and had showers!)

We figured that we would spend a while at the horse park and then continue down the road. There was so much to do and see that we ended up spending the entire day and went back to the campground for another night.

I learned lots of stuff about horses and horse racing from visiting the park as well as seeing many different breeds of horses. We missed the first show being the harnessing of the draft horses but were there in plenty of time for the parade of the breeds. They have two parade of breeds, one in the morning and another in the afternoon, different breeds both times, so we went to both. It was amazing to see all of the different breeds. They did six in the morning and another six in the afternoon. Everything from Mustangs to Miniatures, Morgans to Thoroughbreds. Some that are quite rare (less than 2000 of the breed) to the extremely popular Quarterhorses.

They also have a lot of static displays and even a tack shop and a farrier. Apparently being a farrier can be quite lucrative. They have a display on the wall that shows the steps of shoeing a horse. The guy is working out of the back of an old half ton. He now has a contract for a few large horse farms and is working out of the back of his Mercedes.

What do the following have in common: A Canon, a Coronet, a Coffin, a White Line, and a Frog? They are parts of a leg of a horse. The Frog is almost half water and functions as a shock absorber and aids in blood circulation in the hoof. I have to get this right, there is a vet, a horse groomer, at least one avid horse owner, and more than a few horse admirers on the list. Ok horse people, snap quiz, if you have one horse hitched in front of a pair of horses what is the configuration called? (Answer for the rest of us below)

The horses at the Park are very mixed from the Bureau of Land Management Mustangs, to prized race horses. We were amazed at some of the Horses in the Hall of Champions. The horses meant nothing to us but lots of people were ouhning and ahning over them. We found out during the show about a few of the horses. Cigar, a thoroughbred, has earnings on the track (not counting stud fees) \$185 shy of \$10 million, the largest number in the world at the moment. Cam Fella, a Standardbred Pacer, was inducted into the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame he earned over \$2 Million on the track. His offspring have done fairly well on the track too, by 1997 they earned over \$73 Million. I think I remember hearing that the current number is around \$86 Million. John Henry another thoroughbred was another winner on the track with earnings over \$6.5 Million. John Henry had another attribute that amazed us, his stride, in full flight his stride was 25.5 feet. For comparison, Secretariat in full flight was covering 24 feet in every stride.

One of the cutest horses we saw was at the Parade of Breeds. Proud Charlie, a 350 pound miniature horse, at just 36 inches tall, he had more pulling power per pound than any other horse at the farm

(weight or crowd drawing power).

The Museum is really interesting and has lots of information related to horses from prehistoric to modern times. Horses are thought to have evolved in North America but vanished across the Alaskan land bridge, and North America was reintroduced to horses by the Spanish who brought them over in the 1500s.

The Pony Express we saw earlier had a long history that predates the USA. The first post rider in North America was on a route from New York to New Haven, Hartford, Springfield Mass, and Boston. (Whenever you say Springfield you have to qualify which one there are 55 "Springfields" listed in the US in our route planning software, only 26 Portlands.) The first rider left January 22, 1673.

One of the horse racing dynasties hit hard times and went bankrupt. In order to save the over 500 trophies from being auctioned off the state, commercial, and private donors raised funds to keep the trophies together at the horse park. It is an incredible collection of crystal, silver, and gold including many Kentucky Derby, Preakness, and Belmont winners, including a Triple Crown trophy. I'm glad they kept it together it would have been a tragedy to break it up.



Triple Crown and Kentucky Derby Trophies

Speaking of the Kentucky Derby, it's official flower was the White Carnation, but in 1903 the florist didn't deliver and one of the owner's wives ran out to her garden and made a blanket of roses. It has been the "Run for the roses" ever since.

If you have one horse hitched in front of a pair of horses the configuration is called a unicorn.

Subject: West Virginia and Virginia
Date: Mon, 27 Mar 2000 20:09:42



Shenandoah Valley in early spring

West Virginia and Virginia are incredibly pretty. West Virginia really surprised us, they call it "The Mountain State" for a reason. You were either climbing or falling. We did make it to some back roads we didn't expect. We had a slight problem with my muffler repair, it didn't survive the back pressure of one of the down hill runs. We saw a wildlife refuge that had camping and we turned in. It was one of the wildest trips into the backwoods we have made. They have an interesting way of saving money on roads, pave the middle and leave gravel shoulders. Whenever you meet another vehicle you each have a wheel on the gravel and one on the pavement. It's unique, but a little nerve

racking on sharp curves.

We ended up in a great little campsite right on the lake. I crawled under and did a better job this time (I hope). We got up early for us and headed back out to the highway and on into Virginia. We are running into the problem of arriving before the state parks and national parks are open. Most are opening in mid April or May. We had a great run through most of the Skyline Drive of Shenandoah National Park. It runs at ridgetop and provides spectacular views of the Shenandoah Valley.

We split off and headed to one of the few commercial parks that are open in the area. Tomorrow we head up and finish the rest of the drive and head into Washington DC.

Subject: Washington DC
Date: Tue, 28 Mar 2000 18:48:50

I woke up early hearing traffic. The I-95 is visible behind us in the campsite. It gets busy about 5:30 a.m. We wanted to make it to the metro station by 9:30 but were a little late. We got lost and stopped beside a Bell Atlantic van. He was great and gave us directions back to the Metro. We weren't the only ones bothering him that day we turned around and by the time we got back to where he was another person was flagging him over.

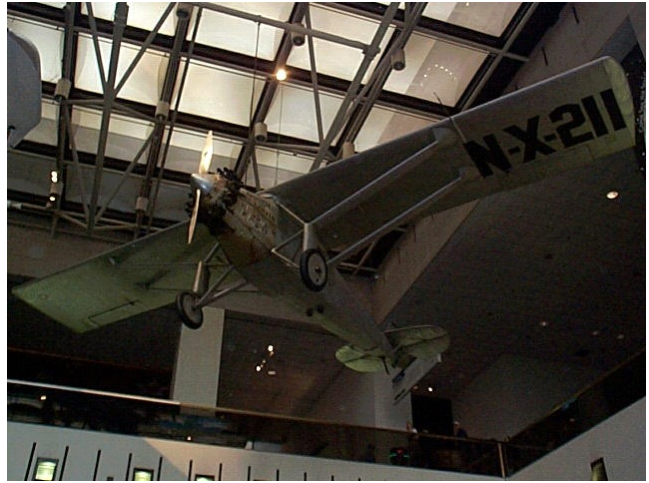
The metro is a great way to get around. A \$5 all day pass lets you cover a lot of ground. We got off at the Smithsonian Station and were carried up and out by the crush of people heading in a variety of directions. Once we were clear of them we got a chance to look around and discovered we were in the middle of the mall. The Washington Memorial, Lincoln Memorial, and the Capitol were visible. We knew that if we started in any of the museums we would be in trouble, so we started covering ground instead. It is a nice hike, we figured with our side trips we did about a five mile walk around the Mall, Whitehouse, Canadian Embassy, the Capitol, and around the Smithsonian's various buildings.

Cherry blossoms are a little early this year. I would be surprised if there are any left by the time of the Cherry Blossom Festival, but it was very pretty for us. There is lots and lots of work being done around the mall and monuments.

Bonnie has always wanted to see the Lincoln Memorial and she finally got the chance. It is an amazing memorial. We visited the Korean War Memorial and were really impressed with the sculptures and the granite reflecting wall. It gave a touching tribute to the thousands of soldiers from all nations who fought there. The Vietnam Memorial seemed especially somber. As we approached the clouds were starting to fill in and the temperature was cooling with the loss of the sun. The Frederick Hart sculptures of the three soldiers are looking at the wall containing the thousands of names of their fallen or missing brethren. There are often mementos left at the wall by friends, relatives or comrades. There were several there: a letter, a rose, and a bunch of daffodils to name a few. Many people were looking up names of loved ones to find where they could be found.



We walked around the Whitehouse and actually saw the front door. I don't think I have ever seen it before. From there we walked down Pennsylvania Avenue toward the Capitol. We really wanted to see the Canadian Embassy. We have heard that it was impressive and it is. We continued down the avenue to the Capitol and were going to take a tour but it started to rain and bus loads of high school students seemed to be about ready to lay siege. We zipped up our foul weather gear and went on to the Museum. After completing most of our five mile walk we were quite ready to spend a little time inside out of the rain. We did check out for a very short time the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum. We could easily spend all day in any of the nine or ten buildings. We wanted to go over to the National Museum of Natural History and check out the Hope Diamond.



Spirit of St Louis

We always learn lots of neat stuff at museums, and gems are always interesting things to see. After our day of diamond mining in Arkansas we wanted to see what a yellow diamond really looked like. They have several stunning examples. We saw several examples of diamonds in the rough including some from where we did our mining.

But I will never look at my aluminum mast the same again. Aluminum Oxide is a pretty common thing to see on masts. Aluminum Oxide in a mineral form is called corundum. It is the next thing to a diamond on the hardness scale and you see it used for abrasives like sandpaper. It is also very rare to see in a pure state or even pure enough to be gem quality. Sometimes the impurities give it a red colour, they have a special name, rubies. Corundum crystals by any other colour, though it is blue we think of most often, are called sapphires.

The Hope Diamond's blue colour is actually caused by an impurity. It has another interesting impurity that makes it phosphorescent. If you hit it with a strong UV light in a dark room and then turn off light, the Hope Diamond will glow a vivid Red-Orange. Makes you just want to take it home and try it, but they might get upset if you tried.

Back in the early to mid 1800s a wealthy British scientist willed his entire fortune to a country that he never visited. The money, a half million dollars, was to be used to create an institution for the increase and diffusion of knowledge. It took quite a while for the politicians to figure out what to do with James Smithson's bequest. It's hard to argue with the success of their decision, the Smithsonian is really something. He actually did get to visit after his death, his tomb was rescued from Genoa Italy (doesn't sound like he liked Britain does it) and brought to the original building of the Smithsonian, locally known as "The Castle".



The Hope Diamond

Subject: Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware

Date: Tue, 28 Mar 2000 19:16:58

We debated heading back into DC for another day but figured we would have lots of time to do stuff this summer on the boat trip south. There were two options for heading east, head north into Washington and cross the Potomac on the Beltway, or head south and cross the Potomac on the Lane Bridge. South seemed like a better choice although it would add a few miles to our day.

I was surprised at how quickly we landed into farming country. After crossing the bridge and heading north we had a nice quiet ride through farming country. It was strange looking at a map where the scale is one inch is four miles. Even at our slow speed we cover a lot of folds of a map in a run of a day. We left Virginia, passed through Maryland and stopped at a state park in Delaware. It was pretty expensive for having no services. We decided to make a little west and pick up one of the Maryland State parks that for a few dollars more included all of the amenities. Electricity might be important tonight, it is supposed to be near freezing.

Tomorrow we are heading into New Jersey, Delaware is going to end up being a drive through state. We are coming back north about a month and a half early, most of the campgrounds are not open yet. We have found a couple of campgrounds in New Jersey and Connecticut that have "limited off season facilities" which means we are going to get to my brothers a few days earlier and the smallest state of the nation, Rhode Island gets to be another drive through state. We should be in Massachusetts on Friday afternoon, a few days ahead of schedule.

Subject: New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, and Rhode Island

Date: Thu, 30 Mar 2000 18:58:27

We are definitely at least a month early heading home. Unfortunately with taxes, and the boat preparations we have to do, we really don't have a lot of choice. Most of the campgrounds have not opened for the season and it is really limiting our ability to do much other than make time heading home.

We were intending to stop at a state park on the ocean in Connecticut but "Limited off-season facilities" means you can take a walk on the beach but not camp. So rather than an early stop and a walk on the beach, we were on the road again to the only campground open in Rhode Island. When we arrived they are not really open, the laundry, washrooms, and camp store are not open. They have been "open" since the first of March but we were the first customer of the 2000 season.

We will be arriving at my brother's in Massachusetts tomorrow. This is not really the end of our trip since we still have to get back to New Brunswick, but we will be spending the next week visiting a lot of boat stores, visiting with family, and not playing tourist.

It has been a fantastic trip for us, I hope you have enjoyed it too.

Mike