2026

Even in a nation threatened by the dictatorial ambitions and incompetent leadership of Donald Trump and with constant new outrageous behavior in his administration, we endeavored to accomplish our usual yearly travel.

Friday, August 28

My traveling companion landed on the evening of August 28. The following day we packed the car and prepared to depart that evening. The plan was to follow Route 66 (now designated as Interstate Highways 40, 44, and 55) from Phoenix to Chicago. Beginning mileage was 104685.

Saturday, August 29

Instead of I-17 north to I-40, it looked like AZ 87 would be a shorter way to I-40. That route took more time. It was a pleasant enough scenic route, even in the rain and eventual darkness. At one point we stopped in the Tonto Forest to check some things on our phones and when we rolled down our windows the complete silence of the forest except for rain drops gave off a profound peaceful but eerie feeling. We had experienced a thunderstorm most of the way. We finally got to Winslow and stopped at a Quality Inn there. Here began the daily breakfast menu of sausage and biscuits. The first few days they were a novelty but as time went on, we began to wish for food that was different. Mileage was 104885; 200 miles so far.

Sunday, August 30

The next day we continued through New Mexico to Amarillo Texas, to another Quality Inn, in which the *quality* was poor. It had a coffee machine, but the tray for the pod was missing. The TV could not be made to receive anything. The parking lot was crowded. Just another breakfast of sausage and biscuits. The Texas hotel didn't meet most of our choices of amenities. Mileage was 105437; 752 miles.

Monday, August 31

We drove to Springfield, Missouri and since we both grew up as Missourians it felt good to be in our home state! We found a Comfort Inn which was better than the one in Texas but the TV and the internet were imperfect. Those two amenities are a must for us. We had a room in the basement, G-63. The room seemed very stuffy and damp. It was a long walk to get the sausage and biscuits! Mileage was 105984; 1299 miles.

Tuesday, September 1

We continued our plan following Route 66. As we continued across Missouri on I-44 just outside Fort Leonard Wood Military Base, often called “God’s country” because no human would want to be there especially after being drafted. We then came to Uranus, Missouri, a photogenic home of fudge packing, country store items and amusing exhibits. If the town has a high school with sports teams, being a cheerleader must be fun. (“Go, team! Up Uranus!”)





As we approached St. Louis the US Route 66 becomes I 55 to Chicago. We traveled north on 55 to Springfield where we found a Cracker Barrel Restaurant that could provide some delicious vegetables to combine with our biscuit escapade. We arrived in Chicago quite late. Mileage was 106496, 1811 miles from the start.

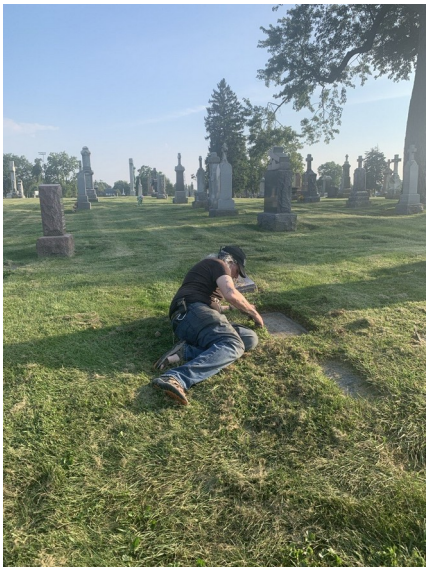
Wednesday, September 2

While in Chicago the Nissan got registered and fulfilled its emission mission.

Then, we set out for St. Mary’s Cemetery, where my mother was buried back in 1946. The expressways along the major routes (Hwy 90, 53, 94, 290 and 55) all seemed to be under construction. GPS apps like Waze, which usually work fine on established routes, can create convoluted paths following computer logic, which does not account for actual driving experience. In

such cases a paper map should often be consulted. Nevertheless, we finally arrived at Evergreen Park, Illinois, the location of the cemetery.

My mother's grave has a unique meaning to me because our lives intersected only at my beginning, and her untimely end. I was unable to know her in person, and her grave was unmarked for decades. I was privileged to give her the marker she lacked and learn what I could of her life. She deserved that. I trimmed the grass around her stone which was partly obscuring the inscription. I may be the only one left who cares to read it, but I feel the need to return periodically and attend to it, as long as I can.





Further down I-55 we headed toward **Hannibal, Missouri** where we both grew up. We stopped along the way at the greatest restaurant called "The Dixie" in Mc Lean, Illinois on Highway 55. After an evening drive we found ourselves checking into the Best Western Hotel on 3rd Street in Hannibal which was conveniently located for the Steampunk Festival. Our room was on the first floor and there were no outside windows because the hotel is backed into the side of a hill. It also seemed very damp. There was a drip from the bathroom ceiling which the hotel said was condensation from the air conditioning system. A drop would suddenly dampen various spots on your clothes. The staff was excellent I must say the 100+ degrees outside was extreme weather. The lady at the front desk, Mari, helped us get a Steampunk t-shirt. We had tried to buy one online and they had closed the sale. Mari called the director of the Steampunk Festival, Tammy Riley, and asked if she could get us one. The following morning, we picked the shirt up at the Information booth.









Thursday September 3

Hannibal, once home to both of us, was a source of memories, cemeteries, records and the Steampunk Festival. Ads made it seem quite interesting. Only problem was the temperature for several days was over 100 degrees. If you've never experienced the 100 degree days with a humidity of 75%+ in Hannibal you haven't missed anything. In this weather you might be able to sweat in the shower if you had no A/C. Luckily our hotel was cool, so we tended to stay inside more than we would have if the weather had been better.

My traveling companion wanted her favorite coconut cream pie at the Country Kitchen. On the first try, the place had closed for the evening. The next day we succeeded. The pie was not as good as she had remembered. Maybe there was a new cook. We made a trip to Aldis and found some Pumpkin Ale.

Friday, September 4

We visited the courthouse in New London, Ralls County, in search of elusive genealogical details sought by my traveling companion, clues about William Kerby (or Kirby) and his daughter America Kerby.

We also checked Marion County Courthouse in Palmyra for the same reason. The elusive America Kerby (Kirby) has not yet been nailed down.

In Palmyra I noticed an office labeled "County Coordinator". Counties shouldn't be uncoordinated, I suppose. They might trip over their county lines.

Back in Hannibal, Main Street had several blocks full of booths selling Steampunk art, crafts and clothing. There were musicians and people in creative costumes. At an outdoor venue I watched a very skilled woman perform a fire-hoop twirling act. The place served a glowing drink, with a tiny battery-powered LED light submerged. Steampunk is an art form that blends past artifacts and styles with imaginative futuristic fantasy. We had dinner at Finns and walked the booths a bit. It's kind of a tradition to have a tenderloin while in Hannibal and Finn's has a good one! It is twice as large as the bun on which it is served.

My traveling companion got a reading from a medium, "Shelby Sees Sparkles" at the Inner Spirit Center on North Main Street in Hannibal. The medium said she was tired and needed a break. Shelby said it was good to be with the person who offered her the most loving kindness. She told her to focus on being her best self. She said we would have a very enjoyable trip. My traveling companion seemed to be exhilarated by her reading.

Saturday September 5

My traveling companion got to see some of her first-grade classmates, Betty Sue, Mike, Leslie, and Cheryl, at a gathering at Finn's Restaurant on Main. Later that evening we had tickets for the Steampunk boat ride which might have been fun if the entertainment had been better. There was a "magician" with an annoying attitude and a loud voice, followed by a band whose singer was unpleasant our ears. There had been a better group scheduled, which

was unable to appear. These were last-minute substitutes. Sandy the boat owner, my classmate from Clear Creek School, said the boat was not responsible for the Steampunk event. We had been on the boat once before in the daytime and it was most enjoyable. There isn't much to view on a dark river.

Sunday, September 6

We wandered down Main St. again to browse the Steampunk booths. Some were interesting, but not enough to buy anything.

I was especially pleased that, as I walked around, wearing my "DUMP TRUMP" hat, that several people told me they liked it and agreed. Later, in Lees Summit, I got a positive reaction with my "IMPEACH" T-shirt. It makes me optimistic.



We drove out by my childhood home, said hello to the old Walnut Tree and measured the distance to my grandparents' home in Hannibal. It was about a 5 mile walk to their house near Mark Twain School. Once, when I "ran away from home", I made that journey, along with my dog, Fido. That was quite a hike for a boy of about 8 years of age.



Monday, September 7

We traveled to Columbia, via US 36 to US 63, and we chose the Best Western on Clark Street which was more “Best” than most hotels on our entire trip. The room was roomy, convenient, being just across from the elevator, and service seemed friendly. The fridge was larger, and the wifi worked. We visited Nolan, Dani, and Dalton at their home briefly planning a dinner for the next day. Mileage was 107099; 2414 miles from our start.

Tuesday September 8

Today I am marking 8 decades of my existence! Nolan, Dalton, Dani, my travel companion and I let Dani choose the Chinese Buffet in Columbia to celebrate. Chinese Restaurants don’t do anything for birthdays…..no cake, no singing or candles. *No problem.*

Earlier my watch had shown the end of time, its battery expired. My travel companion bought me a new watch and 2 pairs of shorts as a birthday present.

Wednesday, September 9

More visiting with Nolan, Dani, and Dalton as we let Dani choose the Indian Restaurant in Columbia.

Thursday September 10

Nolan brought home dinner from Fire and Smoke Restaurant, and we had a family meal at their home. Good conversation and I got a belated Christmas gift of a book, “The Princess Bride” by William Goldman. I have begun reading it and find it more sophisticated than the title might indicate.

I have observed a new trend in several restrooms along the way: Yellow urinal screens. The screens are a flexible plastic device intended to prevent splash-back from a forceful stream. Not being the usual green, blue, or pink, but a color that matches the stream, they seem more welcoming to the pisser.

Friday September 11

Up early for us and traveling across the state to Lee's Summit, Missouri. We got to meet up with Geoff at the Summit Grill after he got off work for some good food. The Grill was adjacent to our next Best Western Hotel. We then conveniently came back to our room to relax and have an interesting visit.

The Best Western in Lees Summit: Their name doesn't make them 'best', but if it says "this is the best we could do", I think they could have done much better. Everything looks newish and pleasant, but there are flaws. A big one is inadequate hot water, having to run the water for 15 minutes or more before it's warm enough to shower in. We were told it was because we were in the "lower number" section...Room 101. Poor system design, clearly. Nominally a "suite" with a couch, and 2 TV's, it has a very compact bathroom/kitchen (a "Bitchen") that one might expect in a small mobile home or camper trailer.

Saturday, September 12

I drove my travel companion to the Midwest Genealogy Center in Independence, which features a Statue of Liberty. *The welcome it symbolizes to immigrants is inspiring, and it reminds us that immigration is what has made our country great, and genealogy more interesting..*

On the way back down Lees Summit Road, 2 young deer crossed the road, calmly and safely, but a little too quickly for a picture.

When I went back to pick my travel companion up, she was very pleased with her visit and said someone there had taught her some genealogy sites she hadnt used before. We grabbed a delicious meal "to go" from the Summit Grill.

Sunday, September 13

I did laundry. It was easy being right above us on the 2nd floor. We met Geoff at Llywelyn's Pub, a Celtic-themed neighborhood pub and restaurant located at 301 SE Douglas St, Lee's Summit. Every year we seem to pick this place. The fish and chips were delicious.

Monday September 14

Limon, Colorado *(the Spanish word Limón usually means lime in Latin America and lemon in Spain, depending on the region.*) We stayed in a Comfort Inn, which was a tight fit. Everything was narrow, including the halls.

Tuesday September 15

I had driven almost all day in the rain. Santa Fe Comfort Inn seemed like a good place to stop. The lobby was the 2 nd floor, the basement was floor 1, elevator was quite confusing. The clerk named Joe at the front desk had a "smart" mouth regarding something my travel companion said. The rates were extra high due to an upcoming balloon festival. *Balloon inflation!*

The TV was better than most. The original coffee machine didn't work. They replaced it just before we left so there was no time to use it. Seems like so many hotels on this trip have either eliminated coffee makers in the rooms or they had problems working properly. *One or two, though, had Keurig style machines, which are much easier to use.*

A couple of the Best Western Hotels in Columbia and Lee's Summit had a fancy coffee maker in the lobby where you could get cappuccino, lattes, chocolate mochas, plain coffee and tea. We used them a lot for all kinds of concoctions!

Wednesday September 16

Then it was time for the 3-day travel back to Glendale. We stopped at a gas station on a reservation to find air. While we were there, we noticed there was a casino with a few slot machines attached to the gas station and a larger Casino on the hill. We gambled our $5 without any luck so we left. We'd probably remember the name of the place if we had WON.

Later in the day we settled into the Holbrook Econo Lodge. The TV featured a channel for Free Speech TV, with Thom Hartman, and Stephanie Miller. It also listed available porn, but that was an extra charge. I don't think we have ever stayed in an Econo Lodge on any of our trips. The ice machine was by the laundry machines. There was a sign that said, "*Best place to drop your pants.*" Mileage 108553; 3868 miles

Thursday September 17

This was our last day of travel. We always feel happy to know we will be in our own home tonight but sad that our adventure is over. I-40 through Flagstaff, I-17 south to Phoenix. Home. As a celebration for completing our Route 66 and family journey we went to Cracker Barrel in Glendale and had

some very tasty food. We also needed leftovers as I had left the house mostly free of food, especially in the refrigerator.

It was a wonderful trip and a very special time to see what a spacious country we have with constant pictures of the sky with clouds and ever-changing terrains! It also was so nice to be traveling with my Travel Companion! Mileage 108782; 4097 miles.