

OUR NEW MILLENIUM OZARK RUN

By Debbie Cull

What do you get when you take four good friends, two Gold Wings with trailers and 11 glorious days on nothing but exceptionally beautiful roads? An awesome adventure to remember! And that's exactly what Tex & Debbie Cull and Milton & Pat Hansard experienced during June, 2000.

DAY 1

We set out a 'few' hours earlier than originally planned on Saturday, June 17th - destination "The Ozarks". We headed West on 20 and then up 431 through Gadsden and across beautiful Gunter'sville Lake into Huntsville where we hung a left onto Rt. 72. We made it as far as Corinth, MS the first day, the cooling rain convincing us to stop for the night. Glad to be sheltered, (the motel even let us park the Wings under their front awning) the thunder rolled through the night and the rain continued to pour. But we awoke with a beautiful Sunday morning to continue on our journey.

DAY 2

Up past Memphis, TN we continued into Arkansas where we went North on St. Route 163, which, on the map, was marked by green dots indicating a "scenic" route. (I might add here, that during this whole trip, we saw *nothing but* green dots!) This gently curving road was lined with large trees on our left and beautiful rolling farmland on our right, with acres of big round bales of hay and rustic barns everywhere we looked. We stayed on Route 163 as far as St. Route 14 in Harrisburg (this would be only one small portion of Route 14 we would end up riding on). We then continued west on Route 14, with miles of lush, green rice fields spanning both sides of the road. The openness of the terrain generated some crosswinds at times, but it wasn't too terrible.

It was on this road that we had our second encounter with rain. All of us determined it didn't dare rain on us, so we moved onward until the sky opened up. We finally had to stop and suit up over our already wet clothes, which was a trick in itself. But we quickly rode out of the showers, and then stopped at a Taco Bell in Batesville that was rated #1 in the whole United States. There we grabbed a quick bite to eat, put on dry clothes and forged onward across Route 14.

West of Batesville the scenery transformed from the straight, flat rice fields into the beginning of the beautiful hills of Northeast Arkansas. Somewhere along the way here, the guys managed to find a gas station that had 101 octane gas at \$2.50/gallon. They just had to do it. Unfortunately, we got behind a bunch of slow pokes that we couldn't pass, and wasted our high octane fuel by putting along. We came into Mountain Home, the Ozark Folk Center, where we hung a left onto St. Route 66, a shortcut over to Route 65. This road turned out to be a wonderful surprise of awesome hills and curves. Once on 65 North we headed into Harrison and then took Route 62 West to our destination for the day, beautiful Eureka Springs, AR.

I immediately after checking into our rooms which we'd had reserved, and unloading the trailers, we all four proceeded to wash and dry the Wings. Can't be seen riding dirty motorcycles, now can we? Later, we walked across the parking lot to a restaurant where we unwound, had a buffet dinner (with the best fried chicken I've had in years) and then turned in for the night.

DAY 3

The next morning, Monday, the rain was again threatening, so we all decided to spend the day and do the town. A trip into Eureka Springs is like stepping back in time, with its quaint shops spanning both sides of the streets that curve up and around the town. We hopped aboard a trolley car that carried us out by the Passion Play and then back into the depot in the village. *Let the shopping begin!* Pat and I had a blast, and even the guys enjoyed looking in all the unique shops and stores. Restaurants dotted the street, candy stores, candle shops, leather shops....anything you can imagine! The most fun for Tex and I was watching Milton and Pat get dressed up in saloon gear for a keepsake, nostalgic photograph! Watch out Eureka Springs, there's a new sheriff in town and he's keeping company with one foxy lady! Yeah, Milton was all pumped up, wearing a big old 6 shooter around his waist, until the wardrobe man pulled one string on the back of his pants, sending them down to the floor in a circle around his feet!

Having had their fill of Sarasparilla for the day, Milton and Tex suggested we patronize one of the 2nd story restaurants overlooking the streets of the village, where we enjoyed Mexican Food and Margaritas together. We then took the trolley back to our rooms, stared at the covered Wings for a while, freshened up and then enjoyed an tasty steak dinner before we turned in for the night.

DAY 4

Ah, Tuesday. A gorgeous morning awaited us as we were all geared up for a day of riding. Our destination was Fort Smith/Van Buren, over near the Oklahoma border, for a day of sight-seeing. Having checked out of our rooms with our trailers in tow, we traveled South out of Eureka Springs on Route 23. This was another scenic byway, called the "Pig Trail", once noted for the abundance of wild razorbacks inhabiting the area. The road meandered down through rolling hills, farmland and, down through the enchanting Ozark National Forest. What an awesome road this was. The road sign said "Very Crooked and Steep Roads next 20 miles". Ah ha, that's our sign! It was like winding our way up into the clouds, misty, mysterious and rather spooky as we negotiated the twists and turns in the foliage-darkened forest, the branches of the trees forming a green canopy over the road. We then began to descend, where the road suddenly opened back up into a gorgeous, sunny valley, with the mountains all around it.

We stopped at a little canoe rental store on Mulberry Creek for a break before heading on down into Ozark, AR. Here the most mouthwatering breakfast imaginable awaited us in a small downtown café. The locals were quite friendly, offering advice as to which roads to take and what to see and do. We had an interesting experience talking to one of the local "law" men who admitted he likes to shoot at cans. Oh-kay! It was going on 11:00 AM by now, and Tex had to steer me back to the Wing as I spied the fried chicken livers the café was putting out for their lunch buffet. They would have made a great snack for later. Oh well.

We saddled up, continued south over a large bridge spanning Ozark Lake where we got on 309 South and back into another section of the Ozark National Forest. Definitely a green dotted road as it wound its way up, and up to the top of Magazine Mountain past Cove Lake. At this point we were very close to Petit Jean State Park, where we'd spent a night on our last year's Ozark run. As we came back down the mountain we got on Rt. 10 and shot straight into Fort Smith, the hot sun beating down on us as we headed west. We had planned on seeing some sights and doing some shopping that afternoon in Van Buren. However, after making a couple of stops to stock up on our "provisions" and a trip to the local Wal-Mart, we decided just to go ahead and find a room, cool off and make it an early day so we could rest up for the following day.

Well, finding a place with availability with rooms that met our "criteria" (i.e., good restaurant within walking distance, first floor rooms

close together, parking in front of the rooms, and hopefully an available garden hose) wasn't as easy as we had hoped. So after about another hour of riding and searching (and crossing the Arkansas River at least four times), we finally checked into a suitable motel near Van Buren. Serious storms with possible hail were moving in, and the hot wind was kicking up, but once again we were able to park our chariots under cover.

Pat and I decided to be brave and don our swimsuits for a dip into the very inviting indoor pool and hot tub, while the guys stared again at the covered Wings and sipped on their cool beverages before joining us girls. We all then sat out on a deck and enjoyed some of the "provisions" we came prepared with (this was a dry county). At dinner time we walked across the street to a neat restaurant and once again had a terrific dinner before turning in for the night. Throughout the night the rain poured outside, luckily no hail was associated with the storm, and the next morning it continued.

DAY 5

Not letting a little rain spoil our Wednesday fun, Milton arranged for us to rent a van. The rain meant only one thing . . . SHOPPING! We went into historic downtown Van Buren, its streets lined with one antique & collectable shop after another. I tried out an autoharp in a music shop, and till this day I'm kicking myself for not buying it. (Post Note: It just so happens that a woman I work with, who was the one who taught me how to play the autoharp, personally knows the owner of the store and gave me the phone number - perhaps it is still there!)

While the guys had breakfast in another local café, Pat and I hit the rest of the shops and picked up a few treasures before we drove over to Fort Smith. There we visited the courtroom of "Hanging Judge" Parker, complete with his bench, witness chairs, etc. used back in the 1800's. It was located in a very interesting museum that showed Fort Smith's role in not only the old west, but in WWI, and how it changed with the nation's progress. We grabbed a late lunch in downtown Fort Smith at The Hamburger Barn, which served, undoubtedly the best grilled burgers we'd had in years.

One thing's for sure, we never went hungry during this trip, and I might add we never had a bad meal during the whole 11 days. Guess we have a nose for choosing good eatin' spots.

DAY 6

Early Thursday morning, Milton and Pat were up at the crack of dawn as they returned the rental van, came back to get us, and our journey on the Wings continued. We had already decided that since we were so close to Oklahoma, we HAD to ride over into the state at least for a few miles so we could get our pins/magnets for another state. So we headed west across the Arkansas River *again* into Salisaw, OK, stopped in a travel center. Then we turned around and headed back east into Arkansas, and guess what, we went across the Arkansas River AGAIN.

Our destination was back up North into the Ozarks. Of course, we planned our route so that we had to have breakfast in the same café in Ozark, AR. What a shame, ha ha! Upon the advice of one of the locals we'd talked with the other morning, we took Rt. 352 where we then got on Route 21 North, another (you guessed it) green dotted road that was just magnificent.

We headed east onto Rt. 74 which traveled alongside the Buffalo River in spots, and lead us into Lost Valley, the most awe inspiring valley the four of us had ever seen. We were all glad to have "Found" this Lost Valley! By the way, the cattle in Arkansas have no idea just how lucky they are. Fields of lush green grass, views that would knock your eyes out, and pristine streams and creeks flowing through them all.

It was about this time that Milton became a bit concerned about his lack of fuel situation. Each mile seemed like 10 to him, and of course we were out in the proverbial "middle of nowhere" and the next spot on the map was 17 miles away with no guarantee of gas. As luck would have it, just as we left the Lost Valley where we found it, we happened upon a little back-woods store that had one lonely gas pump over by the side of it. Milton let out a sigh of relief as he spotted the pump.

And then it happened. Our next real look at Americana... Up the road and turning into the store came an old rundown pick-up truck with a license plate that read "Ask me about my Mules". The truck was pulling an old ragged horse trailer that looked like it was on its last leg. Out of the truck piled 3 young boys wearing actual hillbilly hats, along with their father, who sported a long dark beard that hadn't seen a razor or a comb in years. The man was engrossed in our Wings and trailers, and confessed that he and his

wife had ridden to "these parts" about 12 years ago on a motorcycle, rode back home to Dallas and sold everything they owned, and came back to the Ozarks to spend their lives. (There might be something to be said for this, folks, except I would insist Tex wash and comb his beard at least once a week.)

It was time to climb back into the saddle and head onward on our journey. Up, up, up the steep, crooked mountain roads and then back down into Jasper where we caught scenic Route 7 up to Harrison, AR. This is where we spent Thursday night, (and the 2 following it). We got in rather early, but Tex was feeling the heat a bit so he decided to cool off in the room. I went around and got into the inviting swimming pool (which I had all to myself), and Milton and Pat hopped back on their Wing and rode out to see a Cavern we'd passed on our way in. While they were gone, Tex struck up a conversation with some Harley riders from Ohio (there were 9 bikes all together) who were truly roused by our Wing and trailer. They couldn't imagine how far we could ride without tiring. And they knew that if their female partners heard tell of this or got a look at our trailers, they would have a lot of explaining to do. They were really a very nice bunch of folks.

DAY 7

Friday morning, and what a beautiful morning it was. The sky was a brilliant blue, the sun was shining and we were primed for riding (the trailers kept each other company at the motel). We went south out of Harrison on Rt. 43, dare I say yet another gorgeous road, back across the Lost Valley (which we had found for a Second Time) and then onto 21 North for a bit into Kingston.

Kingston consisted of two antique shops, an auto repair shop called "Malfunction Junction", a feed store, post office, and bank that was like something out of the 1800's. It just happened to be next to a small hometown restaurant, where we stopped for breakfast. The food, once again, was unbelievable. The biscuits were so light they could have levitated off the plate, and I'm sure the fresh eggs were direct from the chicken coop out back. I dare to think what the bacon and sausage had been doing before we arrived.

After satisfying our appetites and our urge to browse in the antique shops, we got back on our Wings and turned onto Rt. 74 to the West. It was here that we came across a beautiful little spot in the road that was nestled on the banks of War Eagle River. There was a small, stone hotel on the left

with a vacancy sign out front, the road lined with huge oak and sycamore trees. This road made a sharp right and then a left over a one-lane wooden bridge that crossed the River. What a vision of beauty this was.

We then traveled north where we caught Rt. 12 up to Beaver Lake and wound around the curving roads across Beaver Dam where we stopped for several photo opp's. The lake was so clean and clear, and immense. The enormous dam was a sight to behold. Tex explained how his grandfather had helped work in building this and other dams in the area. Onward we continued, crossing the Missouri state line then heading back east on Route 86.

We came upon Table Rock Lake, yet another wonderous sparkling clear lake, and across one of the neatest bridges you could ever imagine. It went on, and on, and on. We then dipped backed down into Arkansas across infamous Route 14, down 281 back into Harrison.

Earlier in the day we had decided that before we called it a day, we wanted to go back east of Harrison and check out some interesting looking shops we'd seen on our first day coming into Eureka Springs. We rode and rode, only to find one of the 7 or 8 shops open. It happened to be "Goat Gap". Now let me tell you, this place had skulls, horns and skins of every kind of mountain animal you could imagine (even some you couldn't), including skunks. It was so hot inside the building, with not even a fan blowing, I could only stand about 5 minutes of shopping before I had to go back outside where it was a cool 93 humid degrees.

That excursion was enough to do me in, so we all went back to the motel, cooled off and had a planning meeting for Saturday's ride.

DAY 8

The next morning was a bit overcast as we mounted our two-wheeled adventure machines. The trailers were getting aggravated at us, because they had to spend another long, boring day chained up together at the motel. Today we were going to finish touring the northern lakes, see the other dams and try to find some more beautiful, curving roads (like that would be hard to do). We took a new route this time, turning off 62N onto Rt. 311 at Green Forest. Once again we found ourselves on an amazingly beautiful road, with leaning curves; some posted at 25 all the way up to 55 mph.

On 311 is where we encountered our second one-lane wooden bridge that crossed Osage Creek. This bridge, however, was not in the best of repair. There were two tracks of 2 x 8's laid on top of the original bridge to

give support to cars and trucks passing over. After an oncoming truck crossed the 100' bridge, Milton began to cross, committing himself to the right-side section of 2 x 6's. As he went from one board to the next, the tail end of the previous board would raise up in the air. We chose to lay back and travel the center, unreinforced section of the bridge, staying well behind Pat & Milton. That was an elevating experience!

About half an hour later into our journey, we began seeing clear sunshine drops on our Tulsas. Uh, oh. We had neglected to tune in to the Weather Channel this morning. Having learned our lesson last time, with the first hint of rain we pulled over and suited up. We continued. Drop, drop, drop drop drop, and then gush! The dark rain clouds opened up and commenced to pour heavily upon us. We could faintly see a gas station with an awning in the distance, so we made our way to cover, but not before getting completely soaked. It looked like the rain was socked into the area pretty good, so we went to Game Plan B.

We decided to take the most direct route to Branson, MO and go into the historic part of the old downtown. As a kid, Tex grew up in these parts and preferred to tour Branson as he remembered it as a child, not all the glitzy shows and nightclubs, etc. We headed east on 186 and had to cross over Table Rock Lake again (darn, what luck). We then hopped on 62 North and booked. Luckily, as we neared Branson the rain started letting up a bit. But of course, with the rain, once again came the opportunity to SHOP. Funny how things work out like that (heh heh heh).

The first order of the day was to purchase some dry footwear for Tex and I, as like dummies we left out that morning with Tex wearing a pair of loafers and I in a pair of canvas tennis shoes. We were successful in our quest, changed shoes and socks and began to tour the town. The most memorable shop for me was the old 5 & Dime store which was like walking back into the days gone by. The sounds of 40's music filled the air, and I swear, if you couldn't find what you were looking for in this store, something was wrong. There were toys for sale that I remembered as a little girl, like cutout paper dolls, Lincoln logs, aisles and aisles of dolls, board games, trucks, etc. That was just the toy section! Tex and Milton stopped to look at actual WWI pictures of Pappy Boyington (from the Black Sheep squadron) and many others. I could have stayed in that store for hours. But the rain had let up and our stomachs were calling to us.

We had skipped breakfast because the plan was to go up to Ozark, MO and have lunch at Lamberts, the Home of the Throed Rolls. Well we

made it, and after a 40-minute wait, our table was ready. What a unique and fun experience this was! The waiters hurled hot, homemade yeast rolls across the room at people sitting in booths and tables. They were a welcome treat to satisfy our hunger until our meals arrived. We topped the rolls with sweet honey and butter. Each of our plates contained enough food to feed 3 hungry people, and I am not exaggerating. Plus, there were waitstaff walking around with huge bowls of black-eyed peas, fried potatoes, okra, macaroni & tomatoes, etc., which was also a part of the meal. The drinks were served in huge 64 oz. insulated cups that never needed a refill. After gorging ourselves with all we could without exploding, we waddled back to the Wings and let out a groan as we threw our leg up and over to get on. Whew!

While in the gift shop as we waited for our tables, one of the clerks had mentioned that Historical Route 66 ran smack dab through the middle of Springfield, MO. That's all that had to be said. We were going to ride on Route 66, by God. So north we went, and finally through trial and error we happened upon a sign that stated we were, indeed, on historical Route 66. Success! Now we had to hurry up and go back down to the 5 & Dime store in Branson so we could buy the Route 66 signs to proudly display in our garages. A sort of proof of our accomplishment.

Our mission successful and with smiles from ear to ear, Tex and Milton led us back to the motel where our trailers were waiting for us. Well, should I say, Tex and I made it to the motel. Milton obviously wasn't paying attention and drove right past the motel entrance, having to make a detour through the Wal-Mart parking lot.

As we were waiting for Milton to "come home" so we could tease him some more, I noticed a Coors Light carton stuffed between the hitches of the two trailers. "Who on earth would have done something like that. . . what, does this mean they think people who ride motorcycles automatically drink beer?" Well, I opened our cooler on the trailer to get Tex a cold beer and noticed the cooler also contained 12 cans of Coors Light and a note that said "From your Harley buddies". They had headed out that morning back to Ohio and had left us a good-bye offering. They really were a nice bunch of people, even if their taste in bikes and beer was questionable.

Milton finally found his way back to the motel, with Pat's help I am sure. I think he was just trying to rack up more miles than me and Tex so he could say he rode further, ha ha ha.

Well, still bursting from our 2:00 lunch, none of us felt like doing much except discuss where we were going to go the next day. It was time for us to start thinking about heading back towards home (sob, sob, boo hoo).

DAY 9

Sunday morning arrived, and Pat and I managed to pick out a route that we hadn't already taken, that would still be on pretty roads. Quite honestly, we really can't take credit for picking out such awesome routes – every road we took was outstanding, so it was hard to go wrong. While Pat and I packed (Lord what a chore that was) Milton and Tex went to the car wash and cleaned the Wings again, as they had the morning before. After Pat and I got to dry the Wings (again) we finally got everything loaded, checked out of our rooms and started heading east for home.

At Milton's request we tried to take roads where we could avoid the rice fields, if possible. Our route took us north, then back south, then north again, then south again and so on. We went south on 65 then north on 235 into Yellville where we stopped and ate breakfast at a smokehouse restaurant that had been featured in Southern Living magazine. It was situated alongside picturesque Zinc Creek, and the parking lot was shaded with large oak trees. The buffet breakfast we had would have been delicious had we gotten there several hours sooner, but at best it was a bit mature. Even at that, the food wasn't bad....we still managed to stuff ourselves until we were bursting.

We then continued on our trip home on Rt. 178 where we crossed Bull Shoals lake, and saw the majestic Bull Shoals Dam. Another photo opp. Boy it was getting hot, as it was already high noon. We traveled through Mountain Home and headed south again onto the beginning of Route 341. At this point we were 3 hours on the road and ironically only about 50 miles away from Harrison as the crow flies. We had actually stopped to eat and had traveled over 100 miles in a round about way. Hmmmmm, what to do.

We decided to continue as planned down 341 through the Ozark National Forest, and what a brilliant decision it was. I must say, as far as Tex and I are concerned, that 25 mile stretch of road was THE MOST awesome 25 miles we'd traveled the entire trip. I knew, once we turned onto this road, that it was going to be great. I got a big old smile on my face that stayed there until we got to the end of 341. It is very hard to describe just how moving the scenery and how exquisite this road was. As I looked ahead

into each curve, and as Tex leaned and rolled on the throttle, it opened up into the next beautiful stretch of road; sometimes going up a steep hill, sometimes winding back down, but ALWAYS each view was breathtaking. Each curve smoother than the last, each view of the mountain tops and valleys more magnificent than the one before. Like never before, Tex, the Wing and I became as one. I would recommend this stretch of road to anyone who enjoys an exhilarating ride.

It was hard to top that stretch of road, but we tried. As we continued briefly on a section of infamous Rt. 14 into Mountain View, we went North (again) up 58, crossing the broad and stately Buffalo River in several spots. The jagged and rocky mountain bluffs on the side of the river were a sight to behold, as they reflected off the crystal clear water below. I could even see several dark caves going back into the bluff that were about 500' up the side of the cliff. We continued on Rt. 58 over to Cave City where we picked up 230/25 past Lake Charles State Park.

By this time we had decided that since we weren't going to push it to get home and just take our time, our stopping point for the night would be Jonesboro, AR. We hooked up with Rt. 63 South in Hoxie and, surprise, we were greeted by about 20 miles of (you guessed it) RICE FIELDS!!! I had neglected to realize that the rice fields would also run north to south, as well as east to west in our first encounter with them, duh. Boy, we'd traveled most of the day and were still in Arkansas!

It was about 4:00 p.m. now and it was really hot and humid. After Pat and I surveyed several hotel/motel choices, we decided upon a Holiday Inn Express that was next door to a Brangus Steak House. It turned out to have excellent food, in spite of the fact the place could have used a good spring cleaning. Oh well, it's probably pretty hard to keep a place clean when there's Cajun peanut shells all over the floor, along with my husband's sugar packets from his iced tea. It was another end to another wonderful day.

DAY 10

We awoke on Monday morning with the goal of riding as far as we felt like it and then stopping. We left Jonesboro just in time, because storms were headed that way. We took Rt. 63 South into West Memphis, a road which JUST HAPPENED to take us through another 60 MILES of RICE FIELDS!!!! But it only lasted about an hour. What amazed me was the fact that there were people out there WEEDING those fields. Good Lord, there were miles and miles of the things. That would be a job that never ended,

because by the time you got to the end of one field, you'd have to turn around and start all over again!

We crossed the mighty Mississippi River and buzzed into Memphis. We tried an alternate route to avoid Poplar Avenue which turns into Route 72, and ended up finding Memphis' semi-truck route through town. These darned maps never tell you that kind of stuff – it just looked like a straight shot, a by-pass through all the traffic lights! It wasn't really that bad, and actually we turned off onto Route 175 which had some beautiful homes on it. The road had shade trees covering it to lessen the mid-morning sun's rays. Once we connected up with Rt. 72 E. we made good time after eating breakfast at a Perkins Pancake house and getting gas (next to Perkins once Tex got the pump figured out).

The road in Mississippi was rather indiscript, but hey, we can't have beautiful hills and mountains all the time, or we wouldn't appreciate them when we did get on them. We just clicked away the miles, popping some Patsy Cline and Elvis into the CD player and just taking it easy.

As we crossed over into Alabama, the scenery automatically started to improve. We timed our ride so that we'd arrive in the Decatur/Huntsville area about stopping time. In Decatur we crossed the beautiful Tennessee River, hoping to find a place to stay on the water. Unsuccessful in our venture, we crossed back over the Tennessee River and took the loop around town until we came upon a Key West Inn. Nice place! And it even had a 12-stall car wash behind it, much to Tex's delight.

There was a Barnhill's Buffet next door, but having our mouths watering for Mexican Food that night (which was Pat's excellent suggestion), the Hansards came up with a brilliant idea of getting a taxi to take us to a Mexican place. After surveying the yellow pages and hotel brochures, we decided upon a place called La Cabana. Tex called the place on the phone, talked to a guy named Jose, and asked Jose to tell him why we should come there to eat. Jose finally told Tex that if we didn't like his food, we didn't pay.

So! We got cleaned up, met in the lobby at 6:00 where our cabbie awaited us in a 1976 Bonneville (or at least it reminded me of one). The poor old guy had no idea where we wanted to go. You could tell he was from Alabama because he had 1 tooth in his mouth that I could see from the back seat. But we gave him the directions, and he drove us courteously and safely to our destination. When we arrived at La Cabana, we were greeted by Jose. Tex introduced himself, and an immediate look of fear overcame Jose.

You could almost hear him thinking, "Oh no, what if we said we didn't like the food???" But we DID. It was fabulous. And once again, we ate until we hurt ourselves. We After a long, leisurely dinner and several toasts, Milton with his souped-up Margarita. It was a very enjoyable evening.

When we'd finished, we had Jose summons our taxi, and the same little old driver returned to pick us up. He admitted to us that he "was tard" upon which I glanced at his call book and saw he'd only had 2 fares between dropping us off and picking us up. Poor thing. I couldn't resist the urge to put in my Billy Bob teeth, just to crack Milton up. And it worked. I made sure the driver never saw me, because I really didn't want to hurt his feelings. He was a very sweet old man.

DAY 11

The next morning, Tuesday, Tex performed his ritual of washing the Wing before we departed. I was allowed to wipe her down once again (Pat helped me, thank you). After loading up we headed toward home. We were *ready* to go home now. It had been a fantastic 10 days together. The crowning glory to the trip was when we stopped at our favorite 278 Restaurant for our final breakfast in Gadsden. This had been one hell of a breakfast run (ha ha)! Nearly 2,400 miles! Well, we always said this restaurant has the best breakfast we've ever eaten! Our bellies full, we pressed Eastward on 278 and I must admit I don't remember ever traveling over that section of road in such a short amount of time!!!

We arrived home safely at about 1:00 PM on Tuesday afternoon. It was good to be home, but it was even better to have had such a great time with such true friends. It is surely a trip that Tex and I will remember the rest of our lives.