

UPPER LEFT EDGE

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FREE!

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Resist much. Obey little.



"Really, officer, it's sage brush."



"I'll be here if you need me."

Walt Whitman



MOONS & TIDES

Downloading Arizona

Road to Boonville

When traveling the road to Boonville one must consider much. The road itself is two lane blacktop that twists and turns and undulates through large rounded hillocks green with spring grass, spotted with rocky outcroppings stretching out for miles and miles, with no signs of human habitation. Oh, perhaps a light on a distant hill. A misty rain begins, and we climb hills watching for frost on the 'road'.

"Think we should turn around and forget it?" Mike asked. When we looked behind us we knew there was no turning back: we were going to Boonville.

Boonville is a small town, and like most small towns, everybody knows everybody, and strangers stick out. When we pulled up to the local tavern, we got checked out by the local kids, the local drunks, and probably the local cops. I found a phone and called my hero. His wife answered. "Bruce isn't here," she said. "Do you know where he is?" I asked, after I had identified myself. "He's on his walk," she said. "Do you know where he went?" I asked. "Depends on which way he walked," she said. "Do you have any idea when he will be back?" I asked. "Depends on who he meets," she said. "I have some books I want to give him," I said. "Oh, just leave them at the grocery store," she said. I left the books at the store, was assured that Bruce would get them, and went to the tavern.

The tavern was old, old wood, there was a pool table and there was a sign saying, "Thank You For Not Smoking". In front of the sign was a stack of ashtrays, there were ashtrays on the bar, and people were smoking. Mike asked the bartender, an adult woman, why we could smoke here. She explained that the "law" only covered places that had 'employees' and that this was a 'family owned' bar. I would have been more than happy to spend the night in Boonville, but there are no Motels. I gave the bartender an Edge, and she allowed as she had seen one before. Folks were pretty much nice to us, considering that the usual stranger in town was either FBI, ATF, DEA or Mob. Boonville reminds me a bit of Cannon Beach in the late Sixties, a small town, off the beaten track, full of strange folks, not quite sure what they are doing here, nor really too sure how they got here in the first place.

We inquired about the road south. It was dark, early March, and we were in the Coast Range. Mike was in no mood to deal with a highway like we just drove, especially if it was slick. We were assured that the road to Cloverdale was easy; of course, this was from a long haired guy wearing a black sleeveless t-shirt with the logo of some heavy metal band on it, all skulls and bones. We found ourselves with a decision to make: hang around and meet the future Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, or make it safely to a motel. Any questions? We arrived at the Inn of the Beginning in Cotati in time to see a band called something like 'Government Issue'; it was a three piece with a great drummer, but it was too late. Motel 8 beckoned.

We set out in the morning through the Napa valley with a Winton Marselis tape playing, but there was no avoiding Fresno. We stopped somewhere for food, and had the best guacamole in the world. Then we were headed for Bakersfield on old 99.

The Bars of Bakersfield

There are some very good reasons why so many country songs are written about Bakersfield. Truckers from all over the country stop there to eat, sleep, gas up and check out the equipment before starting out across the desert, or up the valley. If Buck Owens' "The Streets of Bakersfield" is something of the official town song, Buck's Crystal Palace is something of the official tourist trap. Every available inch of wall

space has a photo, a news clipping, or a piece of Buck Owens memorabilia. Cases with guns, guitars, saddles, and 'wear them once' outfits become wallpaper as you wander toward the bar. The bar is dominated by a White Lincoln Continental Convertible mounted behind it. Tipped so you are looking up at the interior with its Indian motif seat covers, its six shooter door handles, its silver dollar studded dash, and the saddle just behind the front seats. Its finest feature is the cover over the rag top that has been signed by way too many famous 'western heroes,' like John Wayne, Lee Marvin, Jim Arness, Jerry Ford? Elvis? Oh, well. . . . A plaque tells you that the car was originally designed by Nudie (Costumer to the Stars) for Elvis, himself, but that Buck had won it in a poker game in Vegas. "He cheated!" the plaque says.

Uncle Mike got a raised eyebrow from me when he ordered a Bud. He raised other eyebrows later but that's another story. The real problem with Buck's was that like most bars in California, we couldn't smoke there. The bartender allowed as how there was a truckstop up the street, and a few other places in town where folks with more than one vice were welcome. I headed for the truck stop, as Uncle Mike drifted off to make some phone calls; we promised to meet at Buck's in an hour or so.

The Boss is a tiny bar behind a truckstop restaurant, and it was filled with truckers; go figure. The conversations included stories of air brakes failing, blown tires, and one old trucker told about his rig starting to smoke and smolder in the desert, and fearing that if he stopped it would burst into flames, put the peddle to the metal and blew it out at 120 mph. The stories, like the road, seemed to go on forever. I noticed a sign that said Bloody Marys were \$1 each between 6 and 10 AM. I met a couple who were having a bracer before they joined friends for Karaoke in a joint down the street. Mike is, strangely enough, a Karaoke fan, so when we met again, I suggested we check it out. Thus my first Karaoke experience. The good, the bad, the ugly and the downright embarrassing. There were moments though, which is perhaps its appeal, when you watch a cowboy singing to his wife, and to her alone, that are real and moving. I'm not a fan, but I will stop making fun of it.

After the Karaoke joint it becomes a blur, a taxi to someplace called The Trout, with a live country band, and ashtrays. By midnight, your beloved Rev. was fading, but Uncle Mike had switched to Jack Daniels, so when I called a cab, Mike waved bye bye. Well, I thought, he's a grown man, what trouble could he get into in Bakersfield? Regretfully I wasn't thinking too clearly.

Virtual Route 66

Before we even left Cannon Beach, I tried to find out about which was the best way to get from here to there, and one place I found was called Virtual Barstow, a web site created by two totally strange and wonderful women. What got my attention was the first thing that appeared on the site was a quote from Hunter S. Thompson's "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas", to wit; "It was when we started into the desert, somewhere around Barstow, that the drugs took affect." The site told me tons of stuff about Barstow which it might be better not to share, but a "Not to be Missed" was Roy's Cafe on Old Route 66.

Dear reader, you must realize that up to this point, though not technically freeways, the roads we had been driving were full of hell bent for death lunatics in cars, trucks and huge semis, who were all trying to go eighty in the same lane. Neither Uncle Mike nor I found this amusing. When we finally turned onto the gentle neglected blacktop that they call the Mother

Road in these parts, it was wonderful. Imagine if you will this road in the fifties, Caddies, Lincolns, driven by Wiseguys and Starlets, Lana Turner, Sinatra, and the Rat Pack going from L.A. to Vegas on whim. Well, when the liquor ran low, or food was needed, Roy's was the only place for fifty miles in any direction. It's a classic diner/gas station, with the bathrooms out back. I bought tee shirts that said Roy's Cafe and had the Route 66 sign on the back; on the front they said "Hell Road." Well, we all have opinions. There were pictures of Roy with all the famous folks on the walls, and the food was just about what you would expect from a diner in the middle of the desert.

(Next month: Temporary Tempe.)

All I want is a warm bed and a kind word and unlimited power. Ashleigh Brilliant

BASEBALL

Well, it's early yet. The Cubs seem to have little more than an alphabetical advantage keeping them out of the basement in the weakest division in the National League. After a disastrous Spring Training, the Cubs, and yes, eating my words, Glen Allen Hill, seem to be getting back to work. We should expect Sosa to start hitting, and not just homers. We recently read a story in the Anderson Valley Advertiser that suggested home runs should be counted the same as foul balls, because they are out of the field of play, and that in baseball, unlike other sports, it is the player, not the ball that scores the points. That kind of thinking is what makes the AVA such a dangerous paper. Go Cubbies!!



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