

## Roger Stoller and Randy Nanstad, 2000-2001 Route 66 Motorcycle Run



### Take 1: May 2000

Roger riding a 1969 Triumph TR6 (650 cc) and Randy a 1995 Kawasaki Vulcan (750 cc). Plan is to rent a truck, haul the bikes to Chicago and spend about two weeks riding Route 66 to Santa Monica and then up the coast highway, CA-1, to San Francisco.

#### Tuesday, May 2

We intend to leave Knoxville about 4:00 p.m. Delayed by: (1) problems with rental truck, first unit had no air conditioning and alternate required service; (2) too many last minute errands; and (3) too long time spent strapping bikes in place in truck. Paranoia is time consuming. Finally depart the Stoller house at 8:30 PM. Drive ½ mile to bottom of hill, open back to check on bikes. Randy called Sonya (his wife) to meet us in Solway with wine for the trip. We stop in Solway, about 3 miles further, pick up wine and open back of truck to check bikes. With confidence building, we get all the way to I-75, another 25 miles before we check on bikes again. Next bike inspection in Lexington, KY and we stop for the night in Frankfort, KY at the Bluegrass Inn at about 12:15 am. I learn that Randy talks in his sleep.

#### Wednesday, May 3

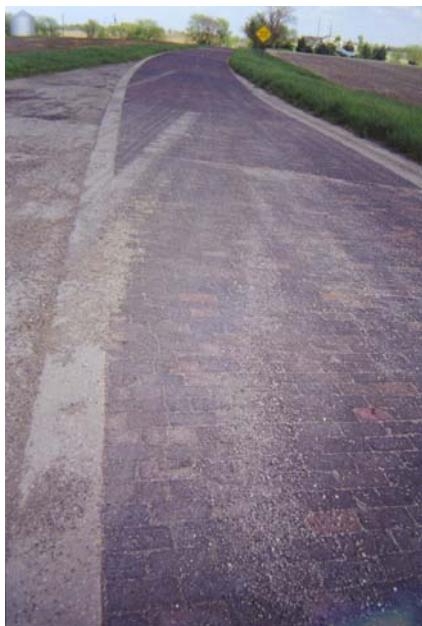
Reach Chicago about 3:30 PM. Unload bikes, get rid of truck, and ride to start of former Route 66 at Jackson and Lake Shore Drive. Take photo and depart west on Adams at about 5:15. Bad timing: rush hour traffic out of downtown, road construction, and unseasonably warm. We travel about 10 miles through Chicago in the first hour. Stop for gas just north of Joliet. I go in to pay and when I come out Randy is talking on a cell phone next to a woman in a Cadillac. She had pulled in and asked him to call the bar at the local American Legion and ask for Wayne King. Ever accommodating, he does so. Bartender says, "Yes, I'll get him. Hey, is this Wilbur?" Randy says "Yes." "How's it going Wilbur" "Oh, just fine." Wayne King comes on the line, Randy hands the phone back to the woman, and she pulls away. Another good deed. We stop for the night in Wilmington, IL at the Van Duyne Motel on the Kankakee River at about 8:15. Made all of 60 miles in 3 hours. Owner lets us put the bikes into a garage. In the parking lot we met two guys from Switzerland who were bicycling Route 66. They looked neither particularly fit or young. Dinner at a

small cafe across the street and a couple games of pool at the Deja Vu Bar. Local bartender looked confused when asked about either dark beer or red wine.



#### Thursday, May 4

Left about 9:00 am. Road was well marked, following railroad line for much of the morning. Passed and were passed by a white Lincoln Town Car a few times. When we stopped to ride an abandoned section near north of Bloomington, we met the retired couple in the Town Car. They had driven from Santa Monica to St. Louis in 1999 and were doing the Chicago to St. Louis section today. South of Springfield we began following an old alignment of the road dating from 1926-1930. Many different road surfaces and textures, concrete, asphalt, and, near Auburn, a few miles of brick. Older concrete sections were narrow, with continuously cast sloping concrete curbs, and near 90° curves. Road apparently followed, rather than cut across some farm or section boundaries. Generally a pretty day, with some bad cross winds in the late afternoon. Lot's of lovely smells along the way: freshly plowed fields, freshly mowed grass, do-nuts, and KFC. Arrived at the home of Larry and Gina (Roger's brother and wife) about 7:30 PM, having covered about 280 miles. Homemade Mexican dinner was delightful.



**Old red brick road in central Illinois**

## Friday, May 5

Started out about 9:30 am. Old road is now M-100 west out of St. Louis, a very nice ride that curves and winds and flip-flops the freeway (I-44). Besides smelling the morning coffee and do-nuts along the road, we passed a sweet-smelling sawmill. These are things you miss in a car; the smell of road kill skunk doesn't linger so long on a bike either. Late breakfast stop at Route 66 Cafe in Cuba. Passing through Rolla, one turn wasn't marked, so we ended up south of the route on M-63. Long detour back along M-32 and M-17 to reach Route 66 about 20 miles east of Lebanon. Near Licking, I begin to notice a noise from the old Triumph's engine. It continued to worsen as we headed for Lebanon. We stopped at a Yamaha boat factory and a construction worker on the roof told us that there was a mechanic at the local Honda dealer who was good with old English bikes, "if you can get him to work on it for you." Found Lebanon Cycle Center and asked about this mechanic. His name was Bill Massey, but he was on an errand. A few minutes later he came in and drove slowly by while scoping out the TR6. With a little cajoling, he generously spent about two hours trying to find the source of the problem and finally said that there was not a simple diagnosis and recommended that I not continue. He refused to take any money for his time. So we packed it in, found a motel across the freeway, and made arrangements to rent a truck in the morning to head home. I am too old to cry about such things, but that's what I felt like that evening. We had made a total of 560 miles from Chicago, and had a somber 670 mile trip home in the Ryder the next day. Looks like the out-of-shape Swiss bicyclists will make Santa Monica before us.

- **p.s.** The problem with the Triumph proved to be a bad main rod bearing. Roughly a 20 degree section of the inner race had become pitted.
- **p.p.s.** Since Massey wouldn't take any payment, when we got home I sent him two of the Jack Daniel's Topsy Fudge Cakes made by a bakery in Lynchberg, TN (see below).

## **Take 2: September 2001**

Since our initial attempt, I purchased a new Triumph Bonneville (800 cc) in the spring of 2001, and Randy bought a new Indian Spirit (1500 cc) that summer. Emboldened by the ownership of new motorcycles with venerable old names, we set out for Route 66 a second time. Unlike the initial attempt at this trip in May of 2000, we were a little pushed for time. Because of work conflicts, we had to squeeze the ride in between one of Randy's foreign trips and one of mine. Randy returned home from Europe late on Thursday, 9/20, and we left with him feeling a little jetlagged. We had about 10 days to complete the trip from Chicago to Santa Monica and then up the coast highway to San Francisco. I had booked a flight home from SFO on Wednesday morning, October 3 in order to get ready for a conference in Germany. We planned to ride about 300 miles per day. In anticipation of having to spend several boring evenings with me (again), Randy brought along a copy of Tom Brokaw's book, "The Greatest Generation" to read on the trip.

### Sunday, September 23 – Knoxville to Chicago, Lakeshore Drive to Wilmington, IL, 64 miles

Trucked bikes from Knoxville to Chicago (about 550 miles). Unloaded bikes at about 4 pm into light, but increasing rain. Waited in truck for storm to blow over until about 4:30. Put on rain jackets and started out for the beginning of Route 66 at Lake Shore Drive and Jackson Street. Made the turn at Lake Shore and headed west on Adams Street in intermittent rain at 5:20 pm. Temperature about 50°F and falling. After 45 minutes stopped in a parking lot off Ogdon Ave. and put on rain pants. They are much more affective when worn. Reached the Wilmington motel where

we had stayed in 2000, Duyer's Inn, at about 7:30. They were sold out and directed us to a place on the freeway. Arrived at the Motel 55 at about 8:00 pm, cold and wet. Put on dry clothes and had dinner in the motel cafe. Afterwards, I started watching Monday Night Football while Randy took our wet jeans and denim jackets up to the laundromat to dry them out. He took his book to read while the clothes were drying. When the game ended about 90 minutes later, I began to wonder what had become of Randy. Just then he returned. He'd fallen asleep trying to read while lying on a bench in the laundromat.

Monday, September 24 - Wilmington, IL, to St. Louis, MO, 289 miles



Clear and windy morning, I can see my breath when I go out to get coffee 7 am. Leave about 9:30 am, temperature between 40 and 45°F. Strong wind out of the N-NW all day long; tries to stand the bike back up on right-hand curves. Stopped off at the farm of David and Helen Wilkins near Chenoa. I had met them while horseback riding at a dude ranch in Colorado last summer. They were gone, so we met their horses and photographed bikes in barnyard with their tractor.



Just south of their farm, we had a stop sign at the intersection of Route 66 and US 24. I thought of my uncle Dave driving from Ohio to California to work for Lockheed building P-38s during World War II. Both going and coming, he had probably passed through this intersection. Rode short segment of abandoned roadway just north of Dwight. Below Springfield, followed 1940-1977 alignment since we had followed the 1930-1940 alignment on the previous trip. Ran into a flock of sparrows about one half way between Springfield and St. Louis, one killed by encounter with my headlight. The road is generally well marked, but we miss one badly-marked left turn in

Edwardsville – we missed it last time also. Very bad sun in eyes heading west on Manchester in St. Louis near sunset. Had dinner with Larry and Gina and kids in St. Louis. Since she had fed us last time, we all went out for dinner, then we slept on their couch again Randy doesn't get his book out.



Tuesday, September 25 – St. Louis, MO – Joplin, MO, 312 miles

Another cold one, 42°F at start, but not much wind. Warmed up to near 70° in the afternoon but cooled off quickly as sun set. Another (like in May 2000) very nice start to day M-100 west out of St. Louis area. Late breakfast at Rt. 66 Café in Cuba. Took picture of Route 66 poster on wall. Many different highway textures and conditions – nice old section of 4-lane west of Rolla that we had missed last time, and old narrow concrete 2-lane west of Springfield, similar to 1930s alignment in IL. Stopped in Lebanon to see Bill Massey at Lebanon Cycle Center. He was interested to see both the new Bonnie and Chief, and he raved about the Jack Daniel's tipsy cakes I sent him after our last visit. Bill also recommends Aleve for aching, aging road-warriors. Beyond Lebanon, we are in new territory for the trip. Road not well marked, Springfield and Joplin area very poor. Spoiled by good signage in IL, we lost too much time stopping to consult maps. Approaching Joplin as sun was setting, bad glare again. Found seedy motel west of downtown. First equipment failure, condensate in tail light lens on Randy's Indian causes bulb to blow. Quick stop at AutoZone to get bulb during a long ride to find a late dinner. Randy manages to read a page or two in book before falling asleep. We are both surprised at how tired we feel at night after 10 hours on the motorcycle. I go out like a light every night on this trip.



**Old Missouri 4-lane**

Wednesday, September 26 – Joplin, MO – Hinton, OK, 315 miles.

Weather a bit warmer in morning, between 45 and 50°F. Pass through a short section (13.2 miles) in southeast corner of Kansas, interesting old bridges. Galena, KS full of derelict but interesting old buildings. Impact of loss of Rt. 66 pretty clear. Just north of Baxter Springs, we pass a “Field-of-Dreams”-like baseball diamond in the country. Breakfast in Miami, OK. For some reason one of the female staff wants Randy to know that she has flannel sheets on her bed. While he is being accosted I hear a story in the parking lot from an old man about hanging out at the Indian dealer as a kid while his parents spent Saturday afternoons in the local tavern. Road very poorly marked, Tulsa pretty straight forward to get through, Oklahoma City is hopeless. Second (and last) equipment failure. Randy pulls up next to me at a traffic light in Tulsa with his sissy bar laying horizontal and T-bag hanging out in space. Two of four bolts had vibrated out. Only about a 5 minute ride to Route-66 Harley Davidson where we replaced bolts and began a regular routine of tightening them several times a day. Bought tools at fine, old-fashioned Burgess Hardware west of downtown. Road of mixed quality, some fast sections and some poor sections. End near Hinton, OK, where we missed a turn due to road realignment. Randy has first off-road trip on Indian when we cut across median of 4-lane – he doesn’t like the feeling of his 800-pound bike sinking in the sand. Why is the sun always in our eyes? Dinner at Zona’s in Hinton. Randy reads another page in his book before falling asleep.



**Bridge into Kansas**

Thursday, September 27 – Hinton, OK – Tucumcari, NM 358 miles

Backtrack a few miles to catch the section we missed in the dark last night, and to check out a 28-span bridge across Canadian River. While Randy shoots pictures I find a bike route down to the riverbed. Road another abandoned section of roadway near Hinton. Breakfast at Trade Winds in Clinton, OK (dining room covered Route 66 wallpaper) and stopped at National Route 66 museum in Elk City, OK. Crossed into Texas; road signage is still spotty, but maybe better than OK. Wind picking up as we approach Amarillo. We stopped at the Cadillac Ranch for photos in the old cars on west side of Amarillo. Weather getting fairly warm, with very bad cross winds. Occasional gusts feel like they want to lift off my helmet. Randy has a small fuel spill due to thermal expansion at gas station. I pick up some sun screen. Two more off road incidents during the day to backtrack across medians. Indian may yet make it as a dirt bike. Randy attracts attention of female motorist who tries to lure him off freeway. I guess the women can’t see how much cuter I am because of my visor. Wind ended abruptly about 30 miles from NM border; speedometer suddenly jumped more

than 5 mph. Sun getting low as we have to ride a short section of I-40 to Glen Rio on the Texas-NM border. Exit at Glen Rio, where the old road is marked as “Business Loop 40.” Book says Glen Rio is almost deserted; book is wrong – completely deserted. Head west with sun blinding us, in less than one mile pavement abruptly ends and we are fishtailing on gravel that we can’t see. Retrace to lovely downtown Glen Rio and get back on I-40 to next exit. Follow old road to Tucumcari, NM. It’s as if this is really the beginning of the trip. The terrain is more beautiful and we get a beautiful sunset behind a red mesa. Randy gets in maybe a half a page of reading.



**Abandoned segment in Oklahoma**



**Cadillac Ranch, Amarillo, Texas**

Friday, September 28 – Tucumcari, NM – Holbrook, AZ, 422 miles

Gorgeous desert morning, about 65°F. While checking the bikes in the motel parking lot see a Harley with a flat tire. Met the couple who owned it in hotel breakfast room. Decided to buy a can of tire patch and inflator at first opportunity; local truckstop doesn’t have it. A mix of old road and I-40 across most of NM, signage is so-so. Seeing more of the expected semi-abandoned towns with strips of old motels and cafes. Late breakfast in Santa Rosa at Silver Moon Café. Temperature getting fairly high by early-afternoon in Albuquerque. Bought tire patch and inflator plus a new



**Albuquerque, NM from 9-Mile Hill. So-called “Angel View” although the temperature felt more like hell than heaven**

visor for Randy at bike shop in Albuquerque. Stopped to see the view from “9-mile Hill” west of Albuquerque and discovered that it was the place I had known as Angel View. Robin and I stopped there for gas late at night while passing through on our honeymoon in 1973. The view at night was very nice, but I could never locate it on subsequent trips to Albuquerque, and no one I ever asked seemed to have heard of Angel View. Remains of Angel View Café still there. Stopped for coffee and donuts in Gallup and called ahead to check availability at Wigwam Motel. We have often been running parallel to train tracks on the old road, but the first time we are stopped by a train at a crossing was in Grants, NM. Long freeway run from Gallup to Holbrook, AZ. Beautiful desert ride, great rock formations at NM-AZ border. Stayed in Wigwam 5 at Wigwam Motel in Holbrook. Owner let us use their laundry facilities, no doubt a break for everyone we met the rest of the trip. Randy briefly looks at cover of book.



**Wigwam Motel, Holbrook, AZ**





Saturday, September 29 – Holbrook, AZ – Needles, CA, 343 miles

Clean clothes and a very pretty desert morning, low 60s. Randy has numbness in left hand that was difficult to get rid of. We buy a bottle Aleve. Pass through Winslow, we hang around on the corner for a while but don't see the girl in the flatbed Ford. Re-visit one of Randy's honeymoon memories by stopping off at Meteor Crater. Well, almost a memory. He and Sonya had \$3.00 on them when they stopped in 1964. Admission was \$2.00 each so they didn't get in; it now costs \$12.00. Very nice ride up to Flagstaff, clear and cool and pleasantly curvey. Good pancakes in small Flagstaff café. Start down out of the mountains west of Flagstaff and the temperature goes up again as we hit the desert. Some cloud cover helps until we are about 50 miles west of Kingman. We pass through Indian reservations and stop in front of a house to ask about a restaurant for afternoon coffee. Family requests ride to restaurant. Temperature right at 100 as we hit Kingman in late afternoon. At fuel stop, three other bikes pull in behind us. They are also riding Route 66, but started in Vancouver, BC. They left Vancouver on 9/13 to ride to Chicago, and left there on Sunday, 9/23 also. One mile from gas station I notice that my gas cap is loose and grab it as it is about to fall off. Very curvaceous road over the mountain between Kingman and Oatman, very hot also – need to average Kingman and Chicago temperatures. Stop at abandoned stone gas station half way up the hill for photo op. Drop into Oatman in time to catch beginnings of great sunset. Twisty ride in the dark from Oatman to Californy border. Cross Colorado River and head for Needles – beginning to think we are going to make it. Stop at motel in Needles at 8 pm, temperature reads 97°F outside office. We pull up next to older woman sitting in car, she looks at Randy and locks door. Randy pretends he can't find book.



**Between Kingman and Oatman, AZ**



**Downtown Oatman, AZ**

Sunday, September 30 – Needles, CA – Santa Monica, CA, Pacific Ocean, 322 miles



**Somewhere between Needles and Barstow**

Roll out at 7:30 to get a head start on the desert, office thermometer reads 80°F. Pleasant ride to Ludlow for breakfast where we had a classic matronly waitress in the Ludlow café. Pass the back side of 29 Palms Marine Base and the Amboy volcano. More abandoned desert towns. Ride from Ludlow to San Bernardino increasingly hot. Typical gusty winds through Cajon Pass as we drop into San Bernardino about 3 pm. We have some problems staying on the trail. Stop to get gas and I tell Randy about almost losing my gas cap in Kingman. About 15 minutes later one of his comes off in traffic and luckily slides down the tank into his lap. Trip from SB to Santa Monica takes 3 hours and includes about 5000 traffic lights – this is why they build freeways. Starts to cool off as we get a breeze off the ocean, and we finally arrive at Santa Monica at 6:15 pm. Can't seem to find the official welcoming party, so we take a few pictures at the beach and then ride up to Dukes in Malibu for a celebratory beer and munchies. We are a bit sun and wind burned, but happy to have completed the 2001 Route 66 Aleve and Preparation-H Tour.



**End of road in Santa Monica: beach and pier**

## **Postscript: Coast highway ride from LA to San Francisco**

Sunday, September 30 – Santa Monica – Santa Barbara, 92 miles

After leaving Dukes, we start the trip north with a cool foggy run to Santa Barbara. We get in about 9 pm. Just enough time to walk out to the Harbor Restaurant got a nightcap. No reading, we sleep satisfied and a bit late.

Monday, October 1 – Santa Barbara – Moro Bay, 146 miles

Nice morning, typical Santa Barbara. We ride to the campus to visit with Bob Odette and Gene Lucas and their staff. Lunch with Lucas and Odette and then we head up San Marcos Pass on CA-154. Pretty, but a little hazy on the ocean side of the pass, warm and clear on the inland side. I take Randy on the loop of Old Stagecoach Road to show him Cold Springs Tavern. We connect with US-101 and head north. Run into coastal fog in the Pismo Beach area, but Avila Beach is very nice. Afternoon coffee and Black Forest Cake at Madonna Inn in San Luis Obispo. Heading west to pick up Highway 1, we also pick up the fog and cool weather again. Stop in Moro Bay for the night.



**Avila Beach**

Tuesday, October 2 – Moro Bay – San Jose, United Van Lines, 215 miles



**Foggy morning in Moro Bay**

Foggy morning, about a 50 foot ceiling. We can just see the base of Moro Rock. Left Moro Bay at about 8:30 and stopped 45 miles up the road at Ragged Point for breakfast. Talked with man in the parking lot who had ridden a Triumph to California from the midwest in the early 1960s. Cool and foggy most of the way up the coast, some visibility under the ceiling. Had about 10 miles of sunshine through Big Sur so we stopped to warm up. Back into the fog to Carmel for our final coffee break. Cut over to US-101 on CA-156 so we could stop at the Indian factory in Gilroy – photo op and look over showroom. Stopped for a short visit with Tim Reilly and Phil Rice at IBM in Almaden and then had to run for the United Van Lines agent in San Jose before they closed. The shippers wanted the bikes to be out of gas, and I nearly did too good a job of running out. About 5 miles short of the United agent’s exit the engine sputtered and I had to cut across 4 lanes of traffic and coast up a ramp. Managed to slosh the vapors around and get it restarted so we could get to a station and put in a mouthful of gas. Arrived at United Van Lines with no time to spare. Staff was grumpy about working till the last minute, but checked us in. Unloaded the bikes and kissed them goodbye. Hauled our stuff about 2 blocks to catch a train up to San Francisco where Randy’s son David picked us up. One last screwup, after putting my credit card into the ticket machine, I misread the labels and end up with 10 tickets instead of one. Fortunately they were only \$4.00 each, and I was able to resell a few of them to folks in the crowd. Dinner in the city with Randy’s son David, daughter Rachel, and their respective girl and boyfriends.



Wednesday, October 3

Uneventful flight from SFO to Knoxville. Randy has subsequently finished Brokaw’s book.

