

**Motor Home Trip to North Mid-West of US, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Dakotas
2011: 68 days, 19 states, 7000 miles in the Winnebago. 5600 miles in the TrailBlazer**

July 4, Monday: Made it to Willcox for my 1st day ... about 600 mi from LA. Had quite a flash storm in Tucson with very high wind and blowing dust reducing visibility to a block or less. Really glad I wasn't driving the Winnebago at that time or would have had to park and pray. Realized at the last minute I could put my bike inside the Blazer to protect from the hard rain. Then a flash flood out by Benson held up traffic for about an hour. Next day dust storms like this were making national news from Phoenix and Tucson.

Tuesday drove to Junction, TX about 650 mi – a very long day and lost two hours on the clock too – but much faster than things will go in a couple days with the Winnebago.

July 6, Wednesday: Made the last short leg of about 280 mi to Corpus Christi. Got the motor home out of storage at Weber Creek and, went grocery shopping and made a run for Barb's house to put everything in her garage refrigerator, get the Winnebago refer cooling, and clean everything up. Another very hard day in total – exhausted, tomorrow I start taking it easy.

Tomorrow: Unpacking and repacking in the Winnebago Sometimes I forget I almost left enough casual clothing here in May, then brought a similar quantity from Calif this week – so I have 12 pair of cargo shorts, 20 T-shirts, etc. etc. Same thing happening on Maui? Left Corpus Christi with TrailBlazer in tow containing the bicycle, and slalom kayak and windsurfer on top of the Winnebago about 2 pm and spending the night at a rest area near New Braunfels a few miles NE of San Antonio.

Friday night I dry camped on the banks of the Red River by Hwy I 35 and had a night of trepidation because the generator stopped putting out electricity – fortunately after the potato was baked. Sat morning 5 min of troubleshooting found a blown circuit breaker on the generator – remains to be learned if it was a transient event, or something more serious. Saturday night came in late to Horse Shoe Bend (COE) campground on Beaver Lake in NW Arkansas. Folks here say it's one of the most beautiful campgrounds they know – but this year parts have been flooded out and covered with debris so not as good as usual. Despite my last-minute unplanned arrival I have a great site right on the water, but there is some of the debris – washed in logs and tree limbs. And my phone works! No TV worth seeing though. I am acquiring a large number of apparent bug bites, some in unlikely places that I think are covered with clothing, but seeing no bugs or mosquitoes. Are they no-see-em's this far north, or heat rash? It has been REALLY HOT some nights working my way north and it's getting better.

July 10, Sunday: Today I came the back way from Arkansas across to the Ozarks, Branson, and Table Rock Lake(Dam) on which I am camper in a COE facility with water & electric. Eighty seven miles of back two-lane roads with steep hills and sharp curves – and at least a dozen different highways – thank goodness for Garmin. If a mistake were made it might take 5 miles to get this rig turned around. Branson is famous, full of dedicated theaters, Mickey Gilley Theater, Elvis Imitator Theater, Andy Williams Theater, etc. and museums, Worlds Largest Toy Museum, Titanic Museum, etc. To my surprise, no casinos. Everyone's gone now running from the heat I suppose, except Mickey Gilley. The street is full of cars, even on the sweltering 110 °F day in July, but nobody anywhere else in town. The place is surprisingly tourist unfriendly, no parking on the side of the street if you want to stop on impulse and most places not even a sidewalk. One might get the impression the traffic lanes just grew out and ate up everything else but the buildings along the street. Looks like Branson was a beautiful area before all the people got here – oh, well, I'm glad they aren't on Maui.

July 12, Tuesday. Left Branson at a reasonable hour this am. Drove north through Osage Beach at Lake of the Ozarks. Some serious winds and storms around Hannibal. Spending the night at Wakonda State Park, Mo.

July 13, Wednesday: Today, that was to be a short day, I got a late start and drove north through Davenport, Ia. Dubuque, Ia. into Wisconsin, 285 mi total. A stop for lunch to see the fort at Fort Madison and a locomotive I would have guessed was 1875 vintage, but was really 1944! The Iowa corn fields are like a sea stretching from horizon to horizon. In the farming countryside everything seems manicured and green – it's an excellent time of year to be here! A little further north approaching and into Wisconsin the terrain becomes rolling hills with the green manicured landscape continuing, but now on the horizons silos pop up all over (corn or grass silos, to

differentiate from dry grain storage silos as no doubt one sees in Kansas). It's like a great magnification of the tea plantations I have seen in Malaysia or elsewhere. I am headed for Prairie du Chien or close, but didn't make it. Some ignorance of new highways in my Garmin, and my over-reaching as usual, detours, bridge out, etc. got me on the long route with dinner time approaching. Now this is a hoot! At Bloomington, WI I found a big grassy farm machinery yard (like a new car dealer you know). So, perhaps this is a place to spend the night. Much prettier and quieter than many commercial RV parks I have been to. And, besides, all day I have wanted to stop and ask about the machinery and about the current farming lore in this area. Maybe if I make it through the night someone will show up in the morning to answer my curiosity about the current "farm technology." ...and as I write this I'm getting ready for the 2nd martini, so can't move the Winnebago.

Two places of interest in Prairie du Chien (Prairie of Dog) are Villa Louis, elaborate mansion of a wealthy fur trader, then business man, rather of his wife as he died young, and Fort Crawford/ Prairie du Chien Museum. A short way up the Great River Road to COE Blackhawk campground, about 3 miles north of De Soto. This is a beautiful quiet park right on the Mississippi. Unfortunately neither cell or internet technology works here, completely thwarting my plan to relax a couple days and plan the next couple weeks of the trip.

July 15, Friday: Went up the road about 10 miles to Genoa where there is an example of the navigation dams and locks that make 1000 miles of the upper Mississippi navigable. This is done by creating pools of deeper water behind each dam, then stepping the boat traffic up or down through a lock past each dam. There about 25 – 30 such lock & dam installations about 25 mile apart. Here with my cell phone working on the ragged edge, I was able to contact John Drew whom I was hoping to contact sometime on this trip. Happens he lives in Lansing, Ia just about 5 miles and across the river from Blackhawk! He graciously and immediately invited me to spend some time exploring and come to dinner of his self-caught fish. The high light was a short drive up ???? mountain to a park in Lansing that presents a spectacular view of Mississippi and back waters for perhaps 6-7 miles in three directions.. While there we got to see a raft-up of 15 barges and tug negotiating the Lansing bridge and one of the sharpest turns in the river. Next morning John took me out for about a 3 hour tour of the back waters and the Mississippi. In the evening John, Dottie, and I went to the local volunteer fireman's steak dinner for good beans and a rubber steak. Sunday morning I set out north to finish driving the Great River Road up to Prescott, WI, then heading inland toward Lake Superior and the Apostle Islands. Stopped in a Wayside just north of Cumberland and had a great steak of my own BBQing. When it was time to sleep I found myself in a war with mosquitoes. Don't know how this happened as they are not supposed to be able to get in the Winnebago when I keep doors and screens closed. Perhaps I was not attentive enough to this? In any case I piled up about 20 dead ones on the night stand before getting to sleep.

Made it on to the Apostle Islands area and got a camp site at Washburn, WI. The main little village that serves the islands is Bayfield which I explored on arrival day. Today, Tuesday I took the ferry to Madeline Island with my bike. I rode all the paved roads on the island and several twice or more due to poor planning, about 50 miles and was tired by mid afternoon. My internet connections aren't doing well up here so went to the Bayfield library to get on the web and pay Maui property taxes. When I came out we had a nice soft rain that continued for several hours cooling things off nicely.

July 20, Wednesday: Moved southeast about 100 miles to Land O' Lakes, WI. Lots of lakes in every direction. Had dinner with Bob & Shirley Barnum, who are acquaintances from Padre Island windsurfing in Texas. They have a house and other buildings on the south shore of Black Oak Lake. After dinner we took a several mile tour around the lake in Bob's small power boat and saw loons, eagles and other water fowl and several deer. Though there are quite a lot of houses submerged in the trees around the shore, we were about the only boat on the lake. Much of Thursday Bob was committed to do some construction work at a friend's house. I went to Bond Falls, very unimpressive. Around 3:30 Bob and I got started setting up for the kayak trip and got on the river about 5 pm. We had a very nice scenic paddle for well over 2 hours on a remote section of the middle fork of the Ontonagon River. Water was moving very slow, class 0, but I was able to practice a couple Eskimo rolls. Friday afternoon water skied on Black Bear Lake, something I thought I was good at in the 60's (yep 50 years). But things change, Bob tells

me everyone knows how to ski on their bare feet now! I managed to get up on the 3rd attempt and got a nice ride without falling but not being too aggressive maneuvering. Bob got up on one ski on the 2nd attempt and skied quite well.

July 23, Saturday: Leaving Land O' Lakes and heading for Manitowoc. Almost cold 70 °F. Sunday I visited the Wisconsin Maritime Museum whose highlight is the WW II submarine Cobia. During the war 38 submarines of this class were built in Manitowoc, side-launched (which is unusual) into the river. Then they were sailed to Chicago, moved over land to the Mississippi and sailed through New Orleans and the Panama Canal to join the Pacific Fleet. This and other exhibits in the museum are very interesting and well presented. In addition today I rode a nice bike trail between the museum and Point Beach, round trip about 20 miles, much along the lake edge. Might be a big deal for someone who doesn't ride a similar distance along the pacific several times a week at home. While biking, a perfect formation flight of 22 (4 diamonds of 4 and a triangle of 3 in front and back) single-engine propeller driven airplanes went over head. Perhaps an artifact of the nearby famous Oshkosh Air Show beginning tomorrow.

July 25, Monday: Drove all over the Door Peninsula today, mostly visiting the farmers! And farm equipment dealers. I probably stopped at 6 – 8 farms, making friends and talking with the farmers, learning about the machinery and techniques. The horizon is continuously dotted with silos but perhaps only half are used, as many farmers find it more efficient to just pile the silage into a horizontal plastic tube, with a special machine, that looks like a giant caterpillar on the ground. Small Bobcat front loaders are used as an all purpose tool at the barn to move 1000 lb hay bails, shovel manure, or the herd cattle almost as good as a horse, and humorous the first time you see it. Some manure spreaders now look like a giant gasoline tanker and actually inject the manure below the soil surface with some sort of tube and plow. One farm milks 3000 cows and are milking continuously 24 hours, another that milks only 100 has milking time of 3 am and 3 pm. Yet, for all the silos, and apparent cattle feed production activity, no cows are apparent. Seems they are largely kept in barns, rather than out in pasture land – of which there is none. Several years since traveling West Australia and learning of farm planters so large they must be guided by GPS satellite navigation, I have been searching for someone who knows how this works. My street navigator is not nearly accurate enough for this at 15 ft. Today I got some hint, learning that before planting they have to circle the field one or more times to calibrate the system. So perhaps several hundred measurements find the centroid of the field with much better accuracy, then when planting begins the GPS system navigates with respect to this centroid. When planting begins in some cases the tractor/planter is on autopilot. One dealer told me of a very wide sprayer having a GPS guided autopilot that begins closing off the outer spray nozzles as the sprayer move into a V-shaped end of the crop field.

Then at some point I realized I am not only close to the location of the greatest civil air show on earth, but that it is happening this week. So today I drove over to Oshkosh and went to the Oshkosh Experimental Aviation Association air show. Publicity is that there are more than 10,000 general aviation planes flying in for this annual show. The show and the airplanes are awesome. The afternoon aerobatics show was even more awesome. At some points in the show I am sure I could count 50 airplanes in the sky, and believe there were 100 or more as new formations kept flying over as those currently in view disappeared from sight. The major aerobatic performances were AeroShell Aerobatic Team (T-6s), Julie Clark (T-34) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julie_Clark, Liberty Parachute Team, Steve Oliver (Chipmunk), Kent Pietsch (Interstate Cadet Car Top), Sean Tucker (Pitts), Scott Yoak (P-51), Clyde Zellers (SNJ), Corkey Fornof (LoPresti Fury), Bob Hoover Tribute, Warbirds. Most spectacular were the Red Bull Helicopter aerobatics, Julie Clark, and Sean Tucker, who would fly straight up until he reached zero speed and begins to fall from the sky. <http://www.airventure.org/attractions/airshows.html>. The air show today was dedicated to Bob Hoover, a well-known aviator who was Yeager's wing man when he broke the sound barrier. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bob_Hoover.

Rode the car ferry SS Badger across Lake Michigan on a rainy Wednesday to Ludington, MI. . Awakening Thursday, my refrigerator seems to not be working in gas mode. Decided to layover at Ludington State Park and try to get service of the reefer tomorrowand to learn that Michigan is the most unfriendly state to campers that I have seen anywhere. \$27 to camp in a ho hum public campground with camp sites crowded together like you hear of Europe (354 sites in

the Ludington SP), a line of 30 cars at the entry gate etc., etc. Not a bad place, but certainly nothing special. And oh by the way, if you want to take your motor home in, another \$29, and oh by the way if you want to drive your towed TrailBlazer it's another \$29. And gasoline is 20¢ higher in Michigan than Wisconsin, which was 5¢ higher than Iowa! I did some bike riding, to a local light house, and did some work on my simulation of the SMAP spacecraft.

July 29, Friday: After laying over and going to a shop early this am to get the refrigerator serviced, it began working on it's own. Drove north along the coast to the Sleeping Bear National Seashore. This has some dense "rain forest" and grass covered sand dunes, and a Navy Rescue Museum at Glen Haven. For a stretch the eastern lake shore is sand dune, at one location a 500 ft drop from the lookout platform to the water. Some folks stumble down and then have to negotiate the very difficult climb back. At Cambuco, Jericoacoara, or one of those places in Brasil or Mexico a sand slide $\frac{1}{4}$ this length, one could rent a bogie board and slide down crashing into the water at the bottom. At Sleeping Bear you could crash into Lake Michigan at the speed of sound – probably why nobody was doing it. *(Post Note: 8/17/11 This morning on the TV I am hearing talking heads of ABC Good Morning America saying someone judged this "Most Beautiful Place in America" for 2011 !! – judges from northwest LP ??).* Saturday morning I moved on to Traverse City. Spent much of the day touring driving up a narrow peninsula past Sutton's Bay and Northport. The beach area along there, and on the north side of Traverse City is quite clean and neat and the water is extremely clean and clear. Met and talked with lots of people, but no one from the area, all tourists like me. One couple came from Green Bay by power boat, a 5 hour trip, told of how much nicer this coast is than Wisconsin's because the latter has more rocky shores and some "pollution" from the coastal manufacturing. The Traverse City beach is a large "U" or half-moon with lots of nice parks and green space separating it from the city. Reminiscent of to waterfront at La Paz in Baja, or Santos Island. I am being told that Torch Lake, where I plan to visit tomorrow, is one of the three or so most beautiful in the world. Traverse City is Michael Moore country. This week the Traverse City Film Festival is in progress, this combined with the beautiful weather mobbing the place. This Film Festival was started seven years ago by Moore and he's a real hero as a result of this and a lot of other philanthropy lavished around the city. Where better but the UAW state for this hero. Today, Sunday, I heard a politician, a state legislator I think, being interviewed on the radio. She was lamenting the high illiteracy in Michigan's cities. She said the form for food assistance is 20 pages long, and these people just can't navigate it. This is the Michigan politician's view of why something should be done about the illiteracy. I wonder if she is illiterate, or just dumb! In another radio instance someone was talking about a fund raising effort to complete a bike way from Traverse City to Sutton's Bay, a nice little tourist village up the west side of Traverse Bay about 10 – 12 miles. If I heard correctly, part of the funds go to busses to bring you back if you are too tired when you get there. Where I come from you only go half way, then return if you can't do the whole distance, or you provide for your own transportation back. Every day a little progress. Today I worked up the east side of Traverse Bay through Elk Rapids, took a swim in Lake Michigan and bicycle toured Charlevoix. This city is the home of the very rich like Brentwood or parts of Palos Verdes in California. Be sure to see the hobbit houses on Park Ave and the classic plantation style on Belvedere Ave as well as the beautiful, in August, waterfront on Round Lake.

August 1, Monday: On the road again. Shortly after departure I stopped to ride a few miles of a very nice Charlevoix/Petosky bikeway then continued through Petosky, Spring Harbor, north and west to Good Hart, a tiny remote village. Here I discussed the area with a couple locals and got onto a National Scenic Highway, Tunnel of Trees. Very narrow and scenic for a about 10 miles (about half of it), then on to Wilderness State Park a bit west of Mackinaw City and the island. Got a great campsite in the trees 200 ft from Lake Michigan here for 4 nights. Going to settle down here for a couple days of relaxation and visit to Mackinac(w?) Island. On the mainland, Mill Creek Park with the water powered saw mill (a mini Disneyland operated by the state!), SS Mackinaw Icebreaker, Mackinaw Suspension Bridge Museum, two lighthouses (McGulpin & Mackinaw), Michlimackinac. On the island Wednesday peddled every road and trail and saw 50 sights and a zillion tourists – despite that it was Wednesday and overcast sometimes. The island, with more bicycles than Beijing, has no motor vehicles except snowmobiles and lawnmowers.

August 4, Thursday: Awakened chilly this am with 64 °F. Decided to move north to Sault Saint Marie. Got a great commercial RV camp spot (Soo Locks), something I frequently try to avoid.

Right on the St. Mary River with nice shade and grass, and within bicycling distance to everything too. Friday I had a good look at the famous Soo Locks in operation, climbed the Tower of History by the stairway (21 stories) enjoyed the views and came down the elevator. Saw the sights in town and chose to bicycle across the international bridge to Canada, 5 mile round trip. The bridge toll for cars is \$3, apparently half for bicycles, but they asked me to avoid the counter strip in the roadway, so maybe they are just pocketing it – not getting rich fast with one bike per week? I got best pictures of the locks from mid-river, but the “bridge police” came out to move me on.

August 7, Sunday: After a hard 5 am rain, the sky cleared and I got on the way west, visiting the Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum at Whitefish Point, grave marker of the Edmond Fitzgerald as well as dozens of others, and stopping briefly to hike in to both lower and upper Tahquamenon Falls along the UP scenic drive of the same name. Arriving at the USFS Hiawatha campground 5 miles west of Munising, MI about 5 pm I was surprised to find it full (on Sunday evening). I and occupants of one other motor home were cruising the place, when they landed just ahead of me in the LAST open spot. But, immediately they offered to share, and so I met the couple of school teachers, John & Irene, from Clinton, NY and we had dinner and a very pleasant evening getting acquainted. Monday I took the boat tour in Lake Superior to Pictured Rocks. Nice, but nothing spectacular, scenery much like Lake Powell in Nevada. Got my obligatory swim in Lake Superior, though I had to walk out 2 – 3 hundred feet to swim without dragging my feet. Bought some of the local whitefish for dinner. Market is down over 600 points – I better go home and get a job. In New Mexico, Arizona and Texas where there are no people I'm not so surprised there is no radio but up here in these densely populated areas??? No wonder they don't now Obama's ruining the country they don't even know what happened today! Oh well, just put on Jimmy Buffet and “One More Drinkin Song.” Tuesday. Decided the commute to Marquette instead of moving as it is only 40 mi. Today I went there to the Michigan Iron Industry Museum Tour. This is about 3 hours long and VERY impressive. The tour takes you to the open pit mines, Tilden and Empire – claimed to be the only iron mines active in the US today, to see the huge machinery (google “heavy haulers”), extensively through the property and the ore processing facility. The walk through the plant where crushing, grinding, separating, and forming into slurry and kiln drying into taconite pellets, the size of small marbles for the pre-playstation readers, was about a mile in length. This is a great tour, though I wish we could have gotten closer the HUGE machinery in the pit. They didn't allow photos on the tour, stated because some folks have used them for negative publicity on the web. In any case some informative photos can be found on the web. Start at http://hunts-upguide.com/ishpeming_tilden_mine_tour.html . We're having some serious rain but doesn't matter much when you are in museums. Wednesday continued the Marquette museum circuit with Cliffs Shaft Mine Museum (don't bother unless you've missed the prior one) and the Marquette Maritime Museum. Trucks in northern Michigan have lots of wheels. Not long like road trains in Australia, but they must be carrying heavy loads of iron or lumber because one trailer will have 5 axels, 20 wheels, so two trailers and the tractor looks like a centipede going down the highway. Cold windy weather (56 °F this am) has set in so I must go south – well besides I have seen the high lights of the UP. But, Thursday turned out to be a nice warm day, temperature around here is emulating the stock market lately, so decided to stay one more day and just do whatever comes to mind – playing with my SMAP spacecraft simulation some, biking in Painted Rocks, trying a famous UP pastie (don't bother, a Top Raman with a few carrots, and onion diced into the water is just as good and much cheaper), having a beer at the Christmas casino.

August 12, Friday: Back on the move today, drove from Munising UP to Rogers City on the LP east coast. They are scratching and clawing to claim some tourist attraction down along here, after Painted Rocks, now they have taken to limestone pits! I wonder if the old strip mine back in Gastown, Pa. is a tourist attraction yet. Or the National Ski & Snowboarding Hall of Fame in Ishpeming (near Marquette), why not in Colorado, Utah, or somewhere people ski and snowboard! And who says “National?” Maybe like the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland instead of Philadelphia, Detroit, or Chicago where people rock and roll? Verizon and AT & T seem to have a lock on all the upper mid-west – my T-Mobile and Sprint have not emitted a whisper for two weeks, fortunately my T-Mobile roams to AT & T for voice, and mysteriously, though it won't tether to the internet in general, it does frequently bring email into the computer. Curiously, in any town up here gasoline prices are all identical, unlike in Ca or Tx, etc where

stations may vary by 10 – 15¢, are they colluding, or does the local government set prices? Maybe all stations owned by the same oil companies? Sunday morning cruising down from Alpena toward Bay City with a brief detour to Presque Isle Lighthouse, then lunch stop at the Tawas Point Park and Lighthouse. Coast line is very neat, well-kept, and green. A stretch along near AuSable is dotted with tiny wood cabins painted in bright colors, reminding me of the crazy expensive beach shanties along the bay south of Melbourne, Au. At Tawas some folks trying to kite surf on the bay side in only ankle deep water, too shallow to clear a windsurfer fin. Staying a couple days at Pontiac Lake SP visiting the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, There a is a Rouge factory tour where one sees finally assembly of the Ford F-150 pickup and the museum. The latter I had visited 15 years ago (when I went to Ann Arbor to learn the ADSIM computer language) and forgotten that it's not really about cars. The high-light then and now is an awesome exhibit of the huge machinery that powered the early factories of the industrial age. I have seen nothing like this anywhere else! Wednesday, back to the Ford Museum location where they have the Greenfield Village. This is even better than the museum by a significant measure. Maybe not great for kids – but. They have moved many historic things to this location, and perhaps recreated some. The Wright Brothers bicycle shop, Edison's Menlo Park and it's laboratories, a railroad round-house and the hand-operated turntable on which you can turn a steam locomotive, a newspaper shop with hand-operated printing press. the Firestone farm that made me feel like I was back home in 1940 – kitchen coal stove operating, a barn with a barn-bridge, which totally absent in the west, an outhouse, For many years I have wanted to know exactly what you do with a spinning wheel and how you do it. I got to see and learn this and also how the process of weaving works with a loom. This is an outstanding exhibit array.

August 23, Tuesday: Nice bike ride today in the Cleveland Metro Park system with niece Melodye. My nephew, Joe, took me on a visit to his work which is a steel “pickling” plant. Large rolls of sheet steel, 40 tons with lengths of 1500 to 5000 ft, arrive at his plant input dock from the steel maker contaminated with slag and other defects that form as the molten steel cools. These are unrolled and threaded through the pickling line, about 1700 ft. long where the steel gets a hydrochloric acid bath, washing, and protective lubricant layer added before re-rolling for delivery to some manufacturer that will use the steel to make product – autos, refrigerators, etc.

August 26, Friday: Arrived last evening at Kendallville, near Auburn, In., at a really nice city park on Bixler Lake. A beautiful grassy large park with spacious sites, nice bike trails and shade trees and the lake. Today went to the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Car Museum and the International Truck Museum. The former has more than one hundred cars of the three very famous early brands owned by thousands of the better off – like Clark Gable, Gary Cooper, William Wrigley, etc. It's clear the when “It's a Duesey,” it's something to be envied. And Auburn, Indiana had a very active role in the history of early quality cars. At the latter museum I saw a few old trucks and Dad's 1936 Nash Ambassador, the 1st car in my childhood. Later a long mis-directed, bike ride from the campground, got me to the Mid-America Windmill Museum. Saturday - the goal today was Grand River COE Park on the Mississippi near Potosi, WI, 342 mi from last night's home. Fortunately I didn't make that. Otherwise I wouldn't be in the nicest rest stop in Ill., and maybe in the country. Delayed by construction, mistakes, and many rough streets punctuated with traffic lights and other hazards getting out of the 1st 50miles of the armpit of western suburban Chicago, my travel is 50 mi and a hour short of the plan. But instead, I'm the sole occupant of a beautiful hilltop rest stop at Galena, Ill., home of Ulysses S. Grant, and 4 other unknown generals of the Civil War. The rest stop has a 75 ft. high observation tower (but closed) to view the surrounding valley and rolling hills in the distance with the prosperous farms of the area. One can still get a good view without the tower – almost impressive enough to come here to see this alone, well maybe not quite that good. Also, good TV, internet, and phone, what luxury! Sunday, after a leisurely start, 5 min later I came upon the quaint and pristine village of Galena, (but saturated with tourist shops and cafes) so had to stop, get out the bicycle and visit the town and Grant's home. I think he doesn't have a presidential library? This got me off to a late start of 1:00 pm for the day and made it only 165 mi to another pretty neat rest stop, Dresbach Info Center, at Lock 7 on the Mississippi a few miles north of La Crosse on the Minnesota side. As nice as Tom Sawyer (hmmm, wonder if he ever was a sawyer) in West Memphis except parked on pavement instead of grass or dust. The pavilion in front has great views of the locks and dam upstream, bridge downstream, and Tom beaching his raft straight

across. Winona to Red Wing, home of the shoes, on a sunny Monday morning yields a continuous panorama of spectacular Mississippi River views. Sadly so much of this beautiful landscape is revealed for only two month a year. Minnesota girls have long slim legs coming white out of shorts that they only get to wear for a few days a year. Moving on toward Minneapolis, this poor Pennsylvania farmer is in awe. In addition to huge fields of flourishing crops, the farms all have mansions, a few silos, grain bins, and elaborate barns and out buildings in good repair. Near Minneapolis I have to visit Minnetonka in honor of Doug & Sandy Boll, windsurfing friends on Maui's north shore who hale (hail?) from this area. North and west of the Twin Cities the agriculture is much less attractive.

Wow! After a month of no T-Mobile data service in most of Wisconsin and Michigan (and Litchfield, Ohio as always – damn it) , I suddenly have blazing internet in Indiana and up through St. Cloud, MN where I just tested 0.5 Mbps in both directions Bluetooth tethering with the phone. Tuesday, and day or frequent showers and continuous driving took me from St. Cloud to Bismarck/Mandan. Tonight a minor fire in the water heater compartment left me without and needing repairs. Wednesday morning I went by an RV shop and they immediately attacked my problem, confirming that it was minor. Since the day was dead by now I decided to forego progress and have fun and education. Drive 40 miles north to the Lewis & Clark Center (at the 2nd Washburn of the trip – remember the Apostles), and Fort Mandan, where half of the L & C party waited a year as the rest went to the Pacific and where they picked up Sacagawea. This is **really big** farming country. They grow wheat, canola (gotta find out what that is when I have web access, soybeans, flax?, sunflower, corn, and sorghum. Overwhelming quantities of grain storage facilities, fields of crops, and machinery almost like the iron mines. I saw a field just harvested with a lot of gigantic machines and tractors in one corner – so stopped to take photos and ask questions. One question I asked was, after telling the guy I was an ex small time farmer before being diverted to design spacecraft, as “could I drive that rig around the field a while?” He said “sure if I go along.” So I drove the 12 wheeler around for a while as I got accustomed to the steering with rear wheels and asked my recurring questions about GPS. After we put the 12 wheeler on GPS auto pilot, he told me that there a variety of accurately sited monuments, some sponsored by John Deere, and some by big farmers, and the GPS navigates relative to these to ~ 1 in accuracy, a scenario I have suspected for some time – but now relatively confirmed. Back in Bismarck, I started south. Wanted some internet so fiddled around Linton for an hour and finally found a lady in the “city” utility office who hadn't gone home to drive the grain wagon yet, who got me on. Then drove south and am dry camping ‘again’ beside Rice Lake by Hwy 83, so close to the ND-SD border I hardly know which side. About ¼ mile off the road in a nice pull out area, certainly not intended for my camping, right beside a lake that I suspect is greatly expanded by the great Minot floods of 2011 (exactly nobody here – wish you were!). It's hot but a stiff easterly breeze is mitigating heat and mosquitoes. Friday; after two days through farming country, today I explored SD Badlands NP, and a couple Minute Man ICBM sites, a silo with a Minute Man replica. In the early 60's I lived in Rapid City while employed installing Titan ICBM's I silos east of town – note Titans, not Minute Man, the latter being a later generation of ICBM's.

September 3, Saturday: I am supposed to be home (Redondo Beach) by now, but not even close. And, oops, suddenly it's pretty cool in SD – I put the electric heater on this morning since I'm not dry camping at the moment. Today I visited the **South Dakota Air & Space Museum**. This is great for a technophobe like me. They have everything from the B-17 to the B-1 in bomber aircraft. But the “space” part is non-existent, there's a token Minute Man standing out front and a Nike off to the side, but nothing to do with space! I was pissed that even the 80 year old docent that I talked to, knew nothing of Titan I's at Ellsworth AFB where they were for a time, and where I worked 47 years ago. He Titan I's were short lived and soon eclipsed by Titan II's and later by Minute Mans, *but no one in Rapid City even remembers that they existed!*

<http://www.robsv.com/cape/c19lv.html>

“A total of 54 Titan I missiles were deployed throughout the United States. By April of 1965, after four years on alert, the Titan I missiles were removed from service..” Well they did have a pretty short operational life. Later in the day I visited Mt Rushmore, Crazy Horse Memorial and bits of Custer State Park. Rushmore was the same as 47 years ago as near as I could discern, but Crazy Horse is greatly advanced and magnificent. The grand plan for Crazy Horse looks it will take another 50 years, given what seems to have happened I the last 50. This is a long term project.

There is some Pigeon Forge and Branson in the Black Hills, but there is still a lot of scenic and picturesque forest around here.

An almost unbelievable occurrence. Friday evening someone pulled into the Teepee RV park beside me who has the same Blue Ox tow bar (bar for towing the TrailBlazer behind the Winnebago) as I have. In the course of idle conversation it was becoming apparent to me that mine was becoming somewhat the worse for wear with several sloppy worn mechanical joints. With this prompting, next day, Saturday I walked into the Rapid City Auto Zone auto parts store to inquire about some Teflon washers that I might replace. Being told they had none, the clerk asked why I wanted them, and when I told him he brought Doug Russell out from the depths of the parts bins. Turns out Doug had recently quit working for Blue Ox to move to Rapid City – and soon was telling me “I have all those parts and tools home in my garage, and I will come over to Teepee and look at your tow bar in the morning!” I was overwhelmed at his generosity. Doug made three trips to Teepee, a brief stop Saturday evening to look at my tow bar, again Sunday morning to work on it and while doing so had to run home to get a heavy duty hacksaw to cut out a damaged $\frac{3}{4}$ ” bolt. He worked on my tow bar for nearly 3 hours, replacing all the wearing parts with new stuff and lubricating where appropriate. And for this he would accept **nothing** but thanks – can you believe it! I am sure a dealer would have charged \$100 and done the work at his convenience. I shall have nothing but good to say about Doug Russell and Blue Ox in the future. What are the chances of walking into an auto parts store having really no connection with the situation, and walking out with about the best solution one could expect!

Sunday afternoon was devoted to touring north to Lead, Deadwood, and Sturgis, SD. In Lead there is a huge open pit, “The Big Cut” silver gold mine that was worked for the better part of a century until very recently, and at some point this deep hole was chosen by Stanford University to look for and successfully discover neutrinos.

<http://hyperphysics.phy-astr.gsu.edu/hbase/particles/neutrino.html>

<http://www.ps.uci.edu/physics/news/nuexpt.html>

How did they ever name this town “lead” I did not learn! Deadwood, famous for the shooting of Wild Bill Hickok is more the “Pigeon Forge” part of the day – I had a few beers, made a couple friend, one from Holland, and drove home late through motor cycle city, Sturgis. **Wow**!, being a tourist is getting to be hard work. Monday, Labor Day, I moved west to Devil’s Tower in Wyoming. Along the way I visited Vore Buffalo Jump, a sink hole that Indians herded buffalo into for slaughter – don’t bother unless you are an anthropologist, it’s not very exciting. Devil’s Tower (the Ayers Rock of Wyoming) on the other hand, is worth the visit. As I hiked around it I kept wondering if the Australians come here to see it. It has similarity to Devil’s Post Pile east of Yosemite, but dwarfs that in size and prominence from a distance. At my campsite I met Capt. Dillon and Lieutenant Rob, two 17 year olds (well probably 25) from the AF base in Cheyenne who ‘man’ Minute Man silos, I thought these were all deactivate but apparently not. To my relief, they know what a Titan I is! Wednesday morning after dry camping the night at Tongue River Crossing Historical Marker, made the long slog across Big Horn Pass to Cody, reaching 9050 ft at one point on the Garmin. A second climb into the east end of Yellowstone to 8540 ft. It appears that the big fires of a few years ago were concentrated east, in a part of the park I didn’t visit on last year’s tour. Third climbing out through the south Tetons to 87?? ft.

September 8, Thursday: The third climb. Out of the Tetons to the southwest is mild compared to yesterday. Arriving at Salt Lake City about 5 pm I decided I could catch the Mormon Tabernacle Choir in rehearsal at 8 pm with some rushing around to ditch the motor home and get down town to Temple Square. I have been to Salt Lake several times before, but always in winter when you don’t see much but white and always as a guest with someone else doing the driving. In this early September late afternoon with the sun low to the west showering the steeply rising, mostly green, mountains immediately east, and snowy peaks farther in the distance, makes a splendid view of what appears as a fresh, clean and new city. The Choir was an excellent experience worth the inconvenience and the Tabernacle with largest organ I recall, impressive too. Next time I will plan to explore down town and the Temple Square buildings in summer daylight. Friday, a sprint from SLC to the Virgin River BLM campground a few miles south of St. George, UT, a pleasant and attractive desert place to stay when the weather is not too hot. Finally, Saturday return to Redondo Beach, Ca.