

*Angel and Terry
March on Savannah*
&



Mick and Terry

Invade St. Louis

Or

THE ROAD GOES ON FOREVER

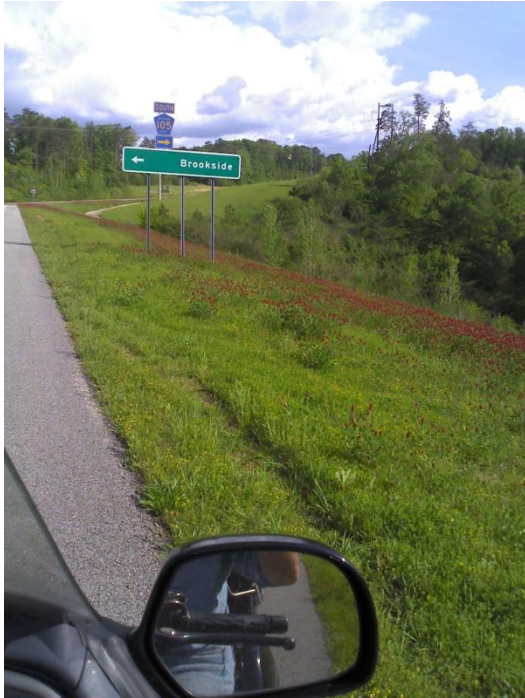
April 2012

Earlier this year Angel wisely decided she needed a break from life in New York City. She wanted to go for a ride someplace where it was warm. After discussions it was decided she would fly into Atlanta and then she and I would ride to Savannah and Charleston for a look around.

Also, along about the same time the NRA was having their get together and Mick wanted to attend. We worked out that after dropping Angel in Atlanta, he and I would meet in Vicksburg and ride up to St. Louis and do the convention among other things. All in all, things worked out well and it sounded like a good two weeks seeing the country.

So, with things arranged I put a new front tire on the Honda and generally checked it over. At the time I left, the Honda had over 144,000 miles on the clock and it still

shows no sign of wearing out. Many is the time I have reflected that in the beginning, getting 20,000 miles on a bike before it was worn out was a very big deal. They can keep the good old days. I left OKC early on the 4th. I was picking Angel up on the 5th. The route to Atlanta was 4 lane most of the way. The only two lanes was a little in Memphis and that part where I got lost going around Birmingham.



Even though the route was mostly four lanes it was still a pleasant ride. Everything was green and growing with blossoms everywhere. This photo is of a group of wildflowers just outside of Birmingham. These seemed to be everywhere and are very pretty. There were many places where there were whole hillsides of them. The weather was nice, in the 60s and 70s with little wind.

Just before I stopped to take this photos I noticed that I was driving by abandoned strip mines and was wondering why they were there. A little after, while I was riding through Birmingham it dawned on me. Birmingham was and still is a steel city. I eventually passed operating coal strip mines as well as active mills of some type in and around Birmingham. Also there were a lot of closed businesses so all is not well.

I had pulled off to check a map and see how lost I was. Not bad as it turned out and with only about five or so miles of back roads I was back on track and making time through Birmingham.

It was spring and the weather warm, so I was not too surprised when I saw clouds building up to the east. As I rode it kept getting blacker. I was ahead of schedule so I pulled off the road and had a cup of coffee and a stretch. I checked the weather and it did not look like I was going to gain anything by trying to wait it out. It looked like I was going to get wet for about 10 or so miles and that is essentially what happened. I rode through the front and called it a day in Bremen Ga. I had dinner in a not so bad Mexican joint, with a good cold beer, within walking distance of the motel and turned in to watch the news.

I wasn't picking Angel up until 10 and I was less than 100 miles from Atlanta so I took my time getting started, I wanted to miss the rush hour. Everything turned out well. I missed the rush hour, the airport was easy to find, Angel's flight was on time and I was in the right place. Angel is a seasoned traveler, she had everything she needed in a backpack, it was not even enough to fill the saddlebag liner. I had her riding gear with

me and that helped, so in short order we were loaded and with only one slight problem heading south. When we hooked up the intercom I discovered my headset was not working. I could hear but not talk. If Angel was happy about that at least she didn't say so.

Overall, we were heading to Savannah, but I wanted to swing by Andersonville on the way. Andersonville was the site of a Confederate prison camp, and not a nice one. We headed south out of Atlanta on a nice road. Everything was green and growing, not a lot of traffic and a real nice road. I found out that most of the states around here are not really into roadside historical markers. With all of the history around here you would think they would have plenty of signs, but no such luck.

We stopped for lunch at a little place alongside the road and discovered they like things fried in this part of the country. I also had already resigned myself to drinking sweet tea. If you ask for unsweetened tea, it they had it then you were ok, but more often than not on the refill you got sweet tea.

There are few historical markers, but there was a sign leading us to this covered bridge. As with most such, it is not being used, it was only for looking.



We made it to Andersonville without any problems. We discovered that it is also the National Prisoner of War Memorial. It is not a large place. The original prison was less than 160 acres and had something like 30,000 prisoners in it. There were no buildings to speak of, only what the prisoners could build out of what they had, meaning not much. Angel and I looked it over and headed back inside for the prisoner of war display. As there was a big cloud coming through we took our time and by the time we were done the rain had done its thing and then moved on.

As we headed east we finally came across a couple of historical signs. This is one of them. Of course it is a Confederate Soldier, and it seems that after the surrender Jeff Davis and his family came this way while they were trying to get to Mexico. The weather was bad and they got caught a little way from here.

That little dab of information got a statue and two signs.



Along about the time we got to McRae the weather was closing in, it was getting dark and there were no sizable towns for quite a few miles. We checked into a fairly nice motel, and we were the only guests. It was next to a fairly nice restaurant so we settled in.

It stormed during the night, but not nearly what it had looked like it was going to do so the Honda was not all that wet. When we left McRae it was overcast, warm, humid, and foggy. I do not like fog. We rode along for about twenty miles or so, and boom, we were out of the fog. The sky was clear and everything was looking good. We were looking for breakfast and not having much luck. We pulled into Vidalia, of the onion fame, and figured we would find something. We were almost wrong. In that whole town, there was every fast food joint you have ever heard of and then a couple, but there were only two sit down restaurants. We settled for Shoney's. That is the first place I have ever been to that had the stuff they call cheese that usually goes on nachos, on the buffet. People were putting it on there hash browns.

You could hear the arteries plugging up.

On down the road we went, still overcast, sprinkling rain every now and then and it was cooling off. Angel didn't get into the riding pants but she did put on another layer and I put on the warm gloves. We pulled into Savannah a little before noon. We did the welcome center and then set out to walk around Old Savannah.

One thing, if you are going on a walk with Angel you had better be ready to walk. She gets a lot of practice in NYC. Anyway, Savannah is a very pretty city, and they sure do like their parks and fountains. This is one that was originally put up in 1854, or so and rebuilt in 1990. Both of those dates are approximate. There are sidewalks all over, and about every two or three blocks they have a roundabout that has a small park in the center. There are old houses all over the place with huge oaks dripping Spanish moss everywhere. Angel doesn't like this photo as her eyes are closed, but, it gives you an idea of what it looks like. We even saw the house where Gen. Sherman stayed after he



got here from Atlanta.

The Savannah River flows by Savannah (duh) and it carries a lot of traffic. The old river front is no longer used for maritime commerce it is all shops and restaurants of all sorts.

After lunch we walked down along side the river and took in

what we could. We also wanted to see Tybee Island and I wanted to get the intercom fixed so we scoured up a Honda shop and bought a new headset. They are real proud of those. Then, we took the wrong way to Tybee Island, discovered our mistake and then actually rode out to the island.

Tybee Island, is a barrier island and is pretty much a typical tourist place, motels and restaurants and access to the Atlantic Ocean. As you can tell by Angel's hair, it was a little windy. It was clearing up but still cool. Never mind



the temperature people were still in the surf. If you look in the distance over Angel's left shoulder you will see Africa.

We wanted to have dinner along the river front and we wanted to get a motel before that so we headed back to Savannah while the sun was going down, right in my eyes. Angel thinks I could see where we were going. We checked into a nice motel and then rode back down to the river front.



This is where Mick and I parked while we were in St. Louis. It was very rough, and I did not like it one bit. Dropping an 800 pound bike is not something I like to do. Well, the road down to the river front in Savannah was worse than this. It was nothing but large rocks with a little concrete between them. I started down but thought the better of it. Reverse turned out to be real handy. We parked on the level and did a little walking.

Larry Moss had told me all about shrimp and grits. Supposedly, it is what all the elite eat and I told Larry that when we were in Savannah I would eat shrimp and grits, so I did. To say I was unimpressed would be a large understatement, especially as I paid \$28 for it. Angel got the better of that deal. After dinner we walked up and down the riverfront checking out things that needed to be checked out. After a bit, we returned to the motel for a good nights sleep.

The next morning we really didn't hurry as it is only a bit over 100 miles to Charleston. During the night the front had blown through and according to the weather folks, we were in for an extra special riding day. It turns out that, for a change, they were right. We passed on the breakfast at the motel, opting instead for IHOP. After that, we pulled out and it was a real nice ride to Charleston. Man that country is really flat. We pulled into Charleston and got directions to the dock for the Ft. Sumter ferry. When Jessica and I were there last we caught the first ferry in the AM and there was no crowd. Not so this time. They are now running two ferries with two departure points. The first place we pulled in was all sold out, but the one across the bay had a 1:30 opening, so across the bay we went.

This is the incoming ferry. You will notice it is sort of crowded and you know I love crowds.

So, when it was our time we boarded the ferry and away we went. It is about a 20 minute or so ride out to the Fort and then they give you about 45 minutes to look around. Really, it is plenty of time. It does not take 45 minutes to see what is there.





If you have any interest in history Ft. Sumter is very interesting. There are several of the actual cannon there were during the civil war as well as several places where there are actually shells stuck in the wall.

Also Ft. Sumter is one of the reasons Charleston is no where near as scenic as Savannah. When Savannah was confronted with Sherman they had the common sense to give

up and Savannah was spared. Savannah has all of the old homes, 200+ year old trees, etc. Charleston was where the war started and was one of the last holdouts. The boys in blue were not all that thrilled with the resistance and as a result, Charleston was shelled and burnt. As a result, no 200 year old houses and oaks dripping moss.

There is a message there somewhere.

When our allotted time was up we boarded the ferry for the ride back. We loaded up and went back across the bay to Charleston. Angel wanted a gelato so at a stop sign I ask a local. The gelato place was on the main shopping drag so armed with the gelato we walked up and down checking things out. We concluded Savannah was much better even though both had the bee shop that Angel was very interested in. Eventually, it was time to move on, and we did.

We pulled out of Charleston and headed NW on some back roads. Angel was flying out of Atlanta the next day and we wanted to get to a place where we would have an easy ride in. St. George S. C. was just the place. We checked into a nice motel and went a little down the road for a nice meal.

Sunday morning dawned clear and bright with the promise of good riding. We did breakfast at the motel and moved out. The riding was great. Warm temperatures, clear skies, good roads, spring in the air, life is good. We hit 1-20 at Augusta, fueled up and headed west.

There is not much else to say about this part of the ride. Traffic was light and again, no problem finding the airport. Angel likes to get to the airport early, and we did. I was

sorry put her on the plane, I would just as soon carry her back to OKC, but I could not. We had a great ride, saw a bunch of nice country and I look forward to doing it again.

Now, it was on to Vicksburg and meeting Mick so we could invade St. Louis. I headed SW out of Atlanta until I was pretty much clear of the city and then picked a road at random and headed west.

The road I was on was a very nice road. Wandering up hill and dale, not much traffic, little towns now and then and shortly after crossing into Alabama I came across this place.

This is or was a mill at Rock Mills Ala. In the background you can see the old water wheel. At one time it was a big deal producing material from all of the cotton grown in the area. According to the sign it is still open producing small quantities of specialty fabrics, whatever that is.



I continued on down the back roads eventually stopping for the night in Sylacauga. How that is pronounced, I have no idea. There was not much going on in Sylacauga and I settled for dinner at Burger King.

I wanted to ride through Selma on the way to Vicksburg. I had plenty of time so I picked what looked like interesting roads, it turned out they were really interesting.



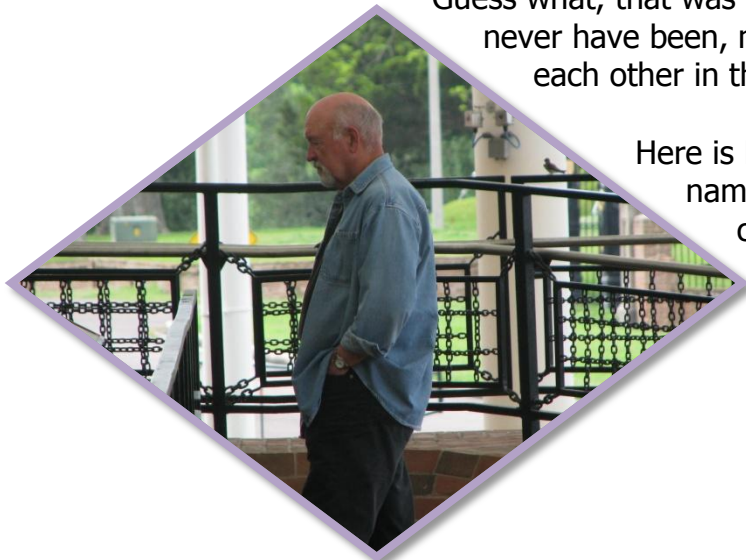
I was following roads that are on the state map. Just a little out of Sylacauga I ran off of the map. This is what I shortly ran into. It would have been a good idea to turn around and *try and find a different* road, of course I didn't do that. I followed this road for several interesting miles and then hit a paved county road. With a choice of left or right, I turned right. Ten miles later with the pavement long gone the hills were so steep and rocky I was getting worried. I stopped at a trailer and ask directions and found out that I

should have turned left at the pavement and that there was no choice but to backtrack. Eventually, I found my way back to the main road with no mishap, fueled up (6.0 gallons) and headed to Vicksburg.

I rode through Selma and picked up a four lane heading west. Shortly after entering Mississippi I jumped on I-20 and followed it to Vicksburg. I checked into a motel and texted Mick as to where we were spending the night I went down the road to do laundry. When I got back, Mick was settled into the motel, other than a sore butt he was fine and had had no trouble getting to Vicksburg.

We had decided that the first thing we were going to do is Vicksburg, and so we did. The first thing was the battlefield which is always interesting. Most of us cannot get a good mental grip on what war was like during the time of the Civil War. Most of us have swallowed the idea that now we have nice wars where only the bad guys get killed, and we never want to see that in reality.

Guess what, that was and is impossible. Wars are not nice, never have been, never will be. What both sides did to each other in the Civil War is unbelievable.



Here is Mick at the exhibit on the Cairo. The name is pronounced like the syrup, not the city in Egypt. The Cairo has the honor of being the first ship sank by a manually exploded mine. It was sunk in the Yazoo River during the

siege of Vicksburg. During the 1970s (?) it was found with large parts of it still intact. It was put back together in a life size display that you can walk around and into. They also have a good inside exhibit with a bunch of stuff on display. We also did the old Courthouse which is the one where the city surrendered and the Coke museum. It is the place where, supposedly, Coke was first bottled, not invented. Then, after a good lunch we stopped at the state visitor's center for a couple of maps and headed towards Tupelo.

We hadn't been on the road too long when we could see the clouds popping up to our north. Just as we were pulling into the well known town of Tchula (spelled correctly) all elements came together and it started to rain. We pulled into a closed station and only had to wait about 15 minutes and it was done. We got on the bikes and less than 5 miles down the road we were back on dry pavement. From there we cut over to the east to pick up the Natchez Trace and ride it into Tupelo..



Shortly after turning north on the Trace we encountered a part that had been hit by a tornado about two years ago. What was strange is that evidently the tornado ran along the Trace for at least 10 miles, that, or it was an extremely wide tornado.

Last fall Bobbe and I had come through Tupelo and stopped in a nice motel and had dinner at a very good

restaurant. We didn't know of any place better, so we checked into the motel, still nice, and then went to the restaurant for a good meal. One of the nice parts of this motel is that they actually have food you want to eat for their "Continental Breakfast" as compared to the more normal fare.

In addition to the Elvis birthplace we had spotted an automotive museum we wanted to check out, and we did. Elvis was Elvis, but the museum was very interesting. They had a bunch of cars of all types including some British cars that could not have had oil in them as they were not leaking. One of the most interesting ones was a 1913 forerunner of the current hybrids. It had a gasoline motor that powered a generator which

powered an electric motor that actually drove the car. It went for \$5000 in 1913 which probably is one of the main reasons it didn't last long.

That done we rode up to Guntown for lunch just to say we had been there. After a not too bad lunch we rode over to the Brice's Crossroads National Battlefield Site. This is a good example as how there have always been spin doctors trying to focus on one side or the other. At the scale of Civil War Battles, this one was not a big one. Sherman was marching across Georgia and wanted to protect his supply lines. Nathan Bedford Forrest, the Confederate General was trying to disrupt the supply lines. There were a couple of skirmishes with each side claiming one and the supply lines staying intact. Forrest is painted as a big hero and all of the Northerner as incompetent at best. Nothing is mentioned about Forrest's later part in the forming of the KKK. Well, after all, this is Mississippi.

That done, we got lost on a few back roads and had a nice ride up to Memphis. We blew through Memphis just missing the rush hour and most of the traffic. We came out of Memphis heading north on 55 and after a pleasant evenings ride we called it a day in Dyersburg.

The next morning was cool and party overcast as we headed north into Kentucky. We were heading to Hickman to pick up the ferry across the Mississippi, the same one Bobbe and I had taken last fall, just going the other way.

We had to wait about 30 minutes for the ferry to get back from the other side. We were the only vehicles on the ferry. The guy from last fall who only knew four roads was not there. Maybe he found a new road. I hope so.



We were crossing over to pick up I-55 to get to St. Louis in time to look around in the afternoon. Even Interstates occasionally have their uses. So, we put it to use and got to St. Louis in short order.

As the NRA was in town we decided to cross over into Illinois, check into a motel and then come back and do the Arch. I have been to the Arch and it is very interesting. There is a big museum/exhibit and it is all underground. I was not going to ride the elevator to the top of the arch, but Mick wanted to. Unfortunately it was sold out for the day, but we did get a ticket for in the morning. We passed the afternoon in the viewing the exhibits. After that, we spent considerable time walking all over trying to find the NRA place, which we finally found.

The next morning the plan was to get into town for the opening of Arch and catch the first ride up. From there we would go back and spend the rest of the day with the NRA. It worked out well, the traffic in wasn't even very bad. Mick made it up the arch and then it was over to the NRA. The main thing we wanted to see was the exhibit hall and it was something else. I had no idea there were as many weapon manufacturers, and at the different types of things they make. Suffice to say we spent seven hours walking around looking at things, and I am sure we did not see it all. Two things really impressed me. One, the amount of money people will spend on things they want to do this from a guy with four motorcycles. Two, there was one guy who hand made black powder rifles. They were essentially works of art. If, as he said, he did all of the work himself I am doubly impressed.

While we were there, along about noon, a front came through big time. We could hear the thunder in the exhibit hall and it continued on throughout the afternoon. Along about 4:30 we both came to the same conclusions, namely, our boots were not made for walking and we had entered sensor overload, it was time to leave. Luck was still with us, we made it to the motel between rains. For dinner we walked across the road to a Cracker Barrel which feathered Shrimp and Grits. So, to be fair, I gave it a shot and it turned out to be quite a bit better than what I had in Savannah and a whole lot cheaper.

The plan for the next day was to make it to Wichita, a good days' ride so it was up early. It was not actively raining but it was overcast and the forecast was anything but good with every thing up to and including tornados, and big ones. We had two choices, one sit in the motel and two get to riding, we chose the later and made it about 5 miles before we had to pull in and get into the rain gear. For the next 3 ½ hours the rain varied from sprinkles to very heavy; very heavy being 30-40 mph in the slow lane. For once I was glad to be on the interstate as the road was mostly clear and clean. Just a little past Ft. Leonard Wood, MO we turned off the big road to hook up with Hwy 54 and ride that to Wichita. And then we were through the storm. The sky cleared, it was a beautiful day to ride; it looked doubly good considering what we had just ridden through. When we stopped to get out of the rain gear I was dry, Mick wasn't, his pants leaked. Riding with a wet butt is not one bit fun as anyone who has done it will testify.

As we rode on clouds started building up and the south wind blew, strong. We both grew up riding in Kansas and Nebraska so wind is no a new thing, just something to deal with. It never did rain again, but it for sure blew. We pulled into Wichita about 5 or so and checked into a motel. We had a meal at a Chinese place next door, Jimmy and Phil came by and later we watched the tornados come on through. This is the night that Woodward, OK got hit and the south side of Wichita but, where we were all it did was blow and rain, a whole bunch of each. The bikes were getting tired of sitting out in the bad weather.

The next day dawned clear and clean as it often does after a stormy night. We took off for a little ride to see the damage. We didn't go far and didn't see much. We stopped by Don's just in time to go to breakfast with him and then Peg came by. We sat around lying more or less until it was time to go see Susan and Jimmy. We sat around talking all afternoon, Peg brought some KFC with all of the trimmings and Phil had made a cake, good times. Susan had to study so Mick and I left and took a swing through downtown then back to the motel. Jimmy and Phil came by and we went up to Buffalo Wild Wings for a couple of beers and some more story telling.

Monday was to be the last day of the trip, at least for me. We left Wichita heading south. Mick wanted to visit some of the dead Tates in Blackwell. So we did.

This is Great Grandfather and Mother. They both died fairly young when compared with the Tates back in Tennessee. Aunt Nora, John Tate's sister is there and as I later found out so is Aunt Lou (without a headstone) his other sister. Also there are Aunt Lou's husband and son.



So, with this bunch of Tates accounted for we headed for Claremore, over north of Tulsa and the J.M. Davis gun museum. Over his lifetime J. M. Davis amassed a collection of over 5000 guns of types you cannot even imagine. Guns of ever caliber, gauge, size, type, color etc. When he died he gave it to the state with the agreement that the state would turn it into a

museum and he and his wife could be buried there, and that is the way it is. We got there around one and were there until five when it closed, we saw hardly half. A person could easily spend a couple of full days there. If you are interested in guns it would be well worth your time to check it out.

I had called Jessica to tell her we were coming in and she offered dinner, so to OKC we proceeded. We missed the evening traffic in Tulsa and followed Route 66 to Wellston where we were getting shy of time. We jumped on the Turner Turnpike there and without further ado made it to OKC and Jessica's with time left to buy a bottle of wine.

Jessica treated us to a good homemade meal and listened to all of our stories, looking interested, like a good daughter and niece. Then it was back to the house and a good nights sleep. Mick was ready to get home also as when I woke in the morning he was drinking coffee ready to roll. We rode over to Jimmy's Egg for a good breakfast and with that, he hit the road to Farmington arriving safely with another sore butt.

And now we put another great ride in the books. The best part is I got to do the ride with two people who are very dear to me. The ride covered a little over 4100 miles and covered parts of ten states. We saw a lot of interesting and memorable things with only minor inconveniences. As with all rides, the end leaves me planning for the next one to someplace.

*Those who ride are considered insane
By those who cannot feel the wind*