

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, January 24, 2011

A Winter Trip in 1981: When an antique driver writes about a trip taken in a nine-year-old Cadillac 30 years ago, it becomes a "trip in an antique car." I made such a trip in a 1972 Cadillac Fleetwood Brougham (472 cu. in. displacement) to and from New Mexico in February and early March 1981. The car averaged 12.5 M.P.G., and gasoline prices ranged from \$1.18 to \$1.35 per gallon. I was alone for six days from home to Albuquerque, then had at least one passenger for the remainder of the trip. From Albuquerque, I flew to Los Angeles and return for a six-day sojourn with an old army friend, Anthony E. Rippo of Los Alamitos, California.

We had had a very cold January, but the weather moderated as I left home in mid-February. I had chosen a motor route, much of which was new to me. The first day I drove to Charleston, West Virginia, and the second to the Land-between-the-Lakes in western Kentucky after a visit to Stephen Foster's "Old Kentucky Home" at Bardstown. I was impressed with the State Park between the lakes, built on land between the dammed-up Cumberland and Tennessee rivers, just before they dump into the Ohio. The next morning, I spent time on the "point" near Cairo, Illinois, where the Ohio joins the mighty Mississippi. A small park had an observation platform where traffic could be observed on both rivers. The Ohio was mostly clear of ice, but large flows on the Mississippi were just breaking loose and moving downstream at a high rate of speed, making way for backed-up barge traffic to enter the upper river. First an ice breaker headed north from Cairo, and within an hour, barges were pushed around the point by their able towboats from their refuge on the Illinois bank of the Ohio and began their trips northward. An hour later, I was in the small park at Jonesboro, Illinois, where Lincoln debated Stephen A. Douglas in the southernmost of their seven debates of 1858. That night I stopped at Springfield, Missouri, where I had said goodbye to my parents from a troop train on the Frisco Railroad in 1945, before being deployed to the Pacific.

At Claremore, Oklahoma, the next day, I enjoyed the Will Rogers Museum, built on land where he had planned to retire (he was killed in a plane crash near Barrow, Alaska, in 1935). Later that day, I drove around Will Rogers Field outside Oklahoma City, where I had spent three months in 1945. The longtime commercial airport for Oklahoma City, nothing from Army Air Force days was recognizable 36 years later.

Having spent my fourth night at Oklahoma City, the fifth was at Amarillo in the Texas panhandle, and at the end of the sixth day, after climbing Sandia Ridge as I had done with my 1940 Packard Six in 1944, I was in Albuquerque. The above-named Anthony Rippo flew from California the next morning, and we headed for Roswell, where we had worked together for eight months in 1944 and early 1945. When we were there, the AAF base was a B-17 training school; in the years after World War II, it was greatly expanded by the Air Force to accommodate the first jet fighters and bombers. The economy of Roswell flourished during these years, but before our visit, the base had been closed, and only a few of the buildings, rented out to others, were occupied. The only building we recognized was the old movie theater, long boarded up. Bob Hope and his troop broadcast his weekly radio show from here in August 1944.

Before we left New Mexico, Rippo and I visited Santa Fe and called on Francis E. Stanley II and his wife, Suzanne (parents of Sarah Stanley), who lived in a small adobe home there. The Cadillac stayed at Albuquerque as I flew with my friend to southern California. (The return trip, much less interesting, may or may not be covered in a future edition.)