

Our 34th wedding anniversary Day, April 30, 2011

When we have been to fancy dinners and events from New Orleans to Ottawa, Canada, there's only one place to go for our anniversary and that is Slater, Mo. Saturday, April 30, besides our anniversary, was the Steve McQueen Festival, Slater. If you remember Steve McQueen from the movies besides "The Blob," you know he was very fond of cars and motorcycles. Those are the star features of the festival, cars and motorcycles, but before Slater came breakfast in Sedalia and visit to Blackwater.

Blackwater, now a population of 205, still with 18 tourism attractions, has an unique business in Blackwater's one street downtown – the one with a hiway going through downtown and a windmill in the middle of K hiway/street. The business is Bucksnots Trading Post and Saloon. The saloon is authentic except for alcohol sales, just sodas and water in old bottles to look like alcohol, and a ragtime piano player, Bob Ault. As soon as we entered the saloon's swinging bar doors, there was Bob playing for a crowd of two. I snuggled right next to him on the piano bench as he played Blind Boone's ragtime version of "Dixie." We took pictures of Bob making that piano dance with rags. We had a sarsaparilla and everyone had such a good time as more came in the saloon. I walked around outside, took some more photos of Blackwater, and visited the antique stores.

Our next stop was Arrow Rock's state park museum and historic sites to see in that area where pioneers started going west by way of the Santa Fe Trail. We had been to Arrow Rock before, so going in and out of the touristy shops and driving past the historic homes was about it for tourism in Arrow Rock. Then, we headed north to the small town of Slater!

We a great day of coolness and bright sun often with some gray clouds. We have a tradition of exchanging vows on April 30th, 2PM every year. We have done this in all kinds of weather & places, such as driving thru a thunderstorm in Okla., standing on an voerllok of Ship Rock, NM, but this year we exchanged vows in a parking lot behind some buildings in downtown Slater. Never thought vows could be exchanged is such a "romantic" place. I thought atop Capulin Volcano, New Mex., was more exciting with high winds and 30 degrees at the top of the ancient volanco about 8,000 ft. high and above the tree tops where birds were complaining we were there.

As we left the car (and two kisses at the end of the vows), guess who we met right there on the street. One of the best reporters for the Daily Star Journal, Cynthia! After she asked what a surprise to see us there, I asked her why she was there (without telling her we had just exchanged vows and smooched in the alley behind us). Cynthia had worked for the Slater newspaper 20 years, and she liked to do return visits.

Slater's one street downtown was full of motorcycles and cars for the Steve McQueen Memorial show. We walked the length of the street admiring the cars and motorcycles, went to the Steve McQueen film festival, and I had the best corny dog for only a dollar. Bill took my picture in front of the Slater sign at the wall mural and even Cynthia's friend took our picture to prove both of us were there.

After a fun stay at a good small town festival, we headed for Van Meter State Park, Missouri's tribute to Native American culture of the Oumessourit (where Missouri got its name), Osage, and other cultures in the area. The 300-acre park is preserved for bottomlands, upland forests, and freshwater marshes. The trails were easy and many were in the park. And, we saw an eagle's nest. The park ranger, Connie, we have known for years, talked about the Native American exhibits at the park's museum and events held at the museum.

We went on many trails and then headed for Sedalia. We did not have a candle-light anniversary dinner, but we had a good Mexican dinner with large margarita as we watched a sporting event on large screen t.v. at the restaurant. We got home about 6:30PM, and we won \$11 on our "anniversary" two lottery tickets!

Total cost of our anniversary trip: 180 mile daytrip, \$3.50 for a hot dog, corn dog, & drink, a gift for Bill at Bucksnots for \$6.50, Indian pony greeting cards \$3.95 at Van Meter, and \$18 dinner at El Tapatios restaurant. Just a suggestion – next anniversary celebration for anyone can be as simple as ours. And, Slater is having a Steve McQueen festival again next year! So, how about going to Slater and other places I wrote about instead of the expensive la-de-dah places in the big city!

However, there was something else I had planned for the day – I made Bill a gift certificate for a one hour bike trip along the Katy Trail, Rocheport. I was pretty sure we could rent two old-fashioned bikes and take a short trip along the trail, which I had hoped to do for a long time. So, until later, my little creative gift certificate for one hour ride on the Katy Trail may have to wait until next year's anniversary, April 30th, 2PM – married in the Johnson County 1840 courthouse, Warrensburg, 35 years ago as of next year.