

**Lake Charles, La. High School 50<sup>th</sup> Year Reunion Trip**

**April 12-19, 2011**

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**Miles: 1,854, 31.2 miles per gallon, Chevy Malibu**

**We traveled thru 59 counties and Parishes (La.)**

**Stayed at Holiday Inn Expresses (HIE) for our platinum level of points.**

**“True trip observations & Tidbits”**

**Also, link to <http://modaytrips.blogspot.com/>**

Left Tuesday about 8:30AM and arrived at Arkansas line 10:58AM. In Harrison, Ark., lunch at our favorite, The Dixie Café. Home cooking, with deep friend corn on the cob, and wonderful Ark. accents. This day's travel was basically MO-13 to US-65 south and then on past the MO-86 turnoff to Blue Eye, Mo., and then into Ark. (Blue Eye has an interesting story of why it is called Blue Eye, will send story if any of you would like). Saw unusual sign near Osceola –“Toonerville” – there's a billboard of it (the place that had all the hub caps that are gone). After MO-13 went 4-lane). Weather is cool, sunny, and Ark. Mountains are visible.

Oh yes, if you want to get married, there is the Little Blue Wedding Chapel outside of Harrison. And, you can shop at the Houndawg Flea Market, Harrison. And, don't forget to stay at the Noodle House B&B, Pindall, Ark. Pindall, named after Civil War Confederate MO commander. There is a Fast Track Rd., Eternity Rd., Elope Rd, and don't miss Goat Gap. In Marshall, Ark., Roscoe's Café has burnt down. There is a Daisy Queen not a Dairy Queen in Marshall. First road kill armadillo spotted in Marshall area.

On way to Conway, Ark., there is a gigantic purple Chinese serpent in front of a house. At St. Joe, Ark., there is a Squirrel Trading Post. In Leslie, Ark., there is a sign that reads “Have a Latte.” In Clinton, Ark., there are many stores for sale. There are backyard antiques in Clinton, and there is a dinosaur statue outside of the Dinosaur Oil Co., a storage facility for oil and gas, plus a sign that reads, “Chicks for Clinton.” Noticed in area of Caldwell, Ark., a very fancy storm shelter. Grocery stores are often called mercantile stores in several places. There is a real Indian store in Caldwell plus the “Hog Wash,” which is a car wash.

Conway, Ark., has the Church Alive, and before Conway is Pickles Gap. And, don't forget to visit the Toad Suck park in Conway. Also, before we got to Hensley, Ark., there is a Tar Camp park. The area of Conway is near the area of Arknsas that's had lots of small earthquakes. Darn, didn't experience an earthquake. Some blame the earthquakes on the technique of mining gas by ‘fracking’ or injecting something to fracture the gas-bearing formations. Saw first bayou nearing Pine Bluff, Ark. Pine Bluff is the saddest of all the towns with only a water inlet area for recreation.

**Once ornate, fancy buildings are now in lost grandeur of a deserted downtown.  
Don't go there.**

**Saw first rice fields near Moscow, Ark. Delta country begins as one sees the cypress trees in the bayous. Oh yes, in Mitchellville, Ark., The Mad Butcher store is opened and the Miller's Mud Mill is open too in Dumas, Ark. If hungry, in McGehee, one can go to the Lickin' Hot Fried Catfish restaurant and the Pig Out restaurant. Black Pond slew is outside of McGehee. First crop duster was seen flying low over the fields. Tigues' Fleas would be an interesting stop outside of McGehee.**

**House owners call for levelers in this area of Ark. to keep their houses level because of the soil. Oh yes, out of Jennie, Ark., is the Cotton Picker works, which is really a John Deere business. Now to Louisiana – There is the Cowboy Church is in Kilbourne, La., and Ms. Ellie's cookout at her church will be held soon at Darnell, La. In Pioneer, La., we past a school house with no walls. One could see things still written on the blackboard and wallpaper was hanging from the walls.**

We arrived at our first destination: Poverty Point, a State Historic Site, Epps, La. Site features ancient Native American earthworks dating back 12 centuries before birth of Christ. [Povetypoint@crt.state.la.us](mailto:Povetypoint@crt.state.la.us). See the complex array of earthen mounds and ridges. The area looks like circular design, and in the middle of the circular design was where traders came – this was a large commerce area that supported visitors and those residing there. Population was nearly 5,000 or more before the culture disappeared. We walked the area and learned how the mounds were intricate and soon deserted for reasons still in question. The name Poverty Point is what an 1850 plantation located nearby was called. After we visited with the park rangers, we had lunch at a country café, where I had my first and last boiled peanuts in hot hot sauce. In the Epps, La. Area, where the Poverty Point settlement was, there is the Little Biddy Wedding shop, and a logo for baby chicks in Epps. Also, out of town was the sign, "You Gotta See The Roosters."

After passing Poverty Point lake, we went through Delhi, La., a pretty once railroad town, and still thriving downtown. Further on you can dine on frogs and gar fish in Winnsboro. We were headed for Columbia, Mo. to visit because of writings by William Least Heat-Moon in his book, "Roads to Quoz." Go to Ch. 16, "The Buzz under the Hornet's Nest." We went to the Watermark Saloon and saw the real hornet's nest, and basically saw what Mr. Heat-Moon wrote about in 2008. This chapter is a quick history lesson about the Quachita river and the delight of Columbia. It's a town to explore, everyone was friendly, and thank you Mr. Heat-Moon for giving us the impulse to visit such a town as Columbia.

In Hebert, La., the Jim Bowie Relay station is a State Historic Site. Our next stop was Mamou, the heart of Cajun heritage. This town is about size of Windsor, Mo., and what to do there is to go to Frenchie's Restaurant, and then wait until every Sat. morning beginning at 10AM for true Cajun music broadcasts from Fred's. The

**Fred's building is small, and there is only standing room and no alcohol during the show. Bill took a picture of me at the closed Fred's, we walked thru the Cajun park, and then had our first chicken gumbo, Cajun poor boy sandwich, and shrimp with noodles. Oh yes, did you know Mamou is going to have a wrestling match at their skating rink (try to picture wrestling at a skating rink).**

**Then, we went onto Eunice, La., where at the HIE I met several oil riggers who were traveling to jobs and staying at the HIE. I learned a lot about oil work off shore, and one fella said the job was too hard for \$18 an hour. The group of riggers were fun to talk to. I saw a sign in the area that promoted, "fresh and grilled chicken salad," now, I'm trying to figure out how to grill chicken salad.**

**As we drove in this area, we saw rice fields and rice fields with little white bobbers that looked like cages. Sure enough crawfish were grown and caught in the fields that weren't being used for rice. Forgot to tell that the first sighting for fresh hot boudin was in Estherwood, La.**

**Our next destination was Gueydan, La. Where Bill's great grandfather, W.L. Truman is buried. Truman established the First Baptist Church there. Bill has posted his great grandfather's Civil War memoir at:**

**<http://www.cedarcroft.com/cw/memoir/index.html>.**

**We have visited Gueydan about every five years. We go to the newspaper office, cemetery, the art gallery was closed, and this time we hoped to find someone to let us in the First Baptist Church. We also had a Cajun sausage po-boy sandwich and shrimp po-boy for me. We met the minister's wife & the new newspaper editor, this year. Found out that Gueydan is slipping in population, and the little is holding on. It's about size of Leeton. The town is also known as the duck hunting capitol of the world. We will soon be seeing our feature in the Gueydan paper. Then, we headed for our main destination: Four days in Lakes Charles for Bill's reunion.**

**We also went by the world's largest statue of a bright red Crawfish or some call them mud bugs in front of a restaurant in Lake Arthur area. As we entered Lake Charles, we saw a sign for crawfish called Cowboy Crawfish on E. McNeese St. I tried to eat mud bugs once – dissected the head and everything else and made a pile of parts, but refused to suck out the meat in the tail.**

**We arrived Thurs. to Lake Charles ([www.visitlakecharles.org](http://www.visitlakecharles.org)), went to our HIE, and then Bill drove around town to see his favorite places – where he lived with his parents, the high school, and other locations like Shell Beach where the mansions are, and then onto the casino for an hour. Lake Charles has a big casino, and we only lost 8 cents. Good visit there. Then we prepared to meet everyone after 5 years or more at a downtown bar/restaurant. The group was about 40-50 or so. Everyone talked and hugged each other, and since I was adopted in the group, I visited too. We all ate at the restaurant, and I had fried chicken slices in peanut sauce and Bill had gumbo. Must not forget how I tried to get a duck to cluck like a chicken on the beach at the lake in Lake Charles, a downtown tourism attraction. We saw this lonely duck at the shore, so I approached the duck clucking like a chicken. That duck didn't appreciate my clucking and wouldn't pose for a picture.**

We got up early Fri. morning and headed for Holly Beach, about 50 miles south of Lake Charles. Holly Beach on the gulf was destroyed by the hurricanes. Ten years ago when we visited the beach it was crowded with homes, large houses build high off the ground, and very pretty. This year there is only five or so large houses and many camping trailers. Holly Beach has not really recovered. We walked along the beach, very window, ocean looked grey, and we were actually alone. As we were walking I suddenly saw a hat – Bill took its picture, and I took it to bring home. It was an oil rigger's hat, a hard hat. When we got home, I saw a name on the hat.

Finding the hat has became a feature story:

<http://modaytrips.blogspot.com/2011/04/tale-of-hard-hat.html> and this was so much fun finding and writing the owner thru Facebook!

We returned from Holly Beach and prepared to go to the Fri. night activities at the reunion: The group met a country club where high school events were held, and we all met again, had a buffet of hot dogs and hamburgers, and everyone visited.

Saturday morning events began with a memorial service at Lake Charles High School. The original school burned in 1953, and the current building, not a high school any longer, still resembles the 1950s style of high school. The group gathered to honor those graduates who passed away, and the Kilty members gave their show of marching. The Kilties were a high school girls marching group from 1939 until 1983. The Kilties marched in many community and high school events. They dressed Scottish with a hat and red feather. Select members marched with the drums for the group. A bronze statue of a Kilty is displayed at a locat park. The Kilty girls had to make their own outfits, have honor grades. Their web page is <http://www.lchs-kilties.com/> - some of our pictures are posted there.

The Kilty girls, now much older, did a performance in front of the school and marched to their drummers. The Kilties had a memorial service, too, and then everyone went to a Cajun restaurant for lunch. Bill had chicken-Cajun sausage gumbo, and I had crawfish, which I will always call mud bugs, etouffe, a dish with a lot of crawfish meat parts, served with rice, and an excellent roux sauce. After these events, Bill and I went back to our HIE and got in the hot tub and enjoyed the afternoon.

The evening event was a very formal dinner downtown at another classic restaurant, the Pioneer Club, at the same time the southern La. Crawfish festival was going on at the lake front. I watched some of the crawfish festival from across the street. At the end of the evening, everyone said goodbye to each other, about 130 attended. Bill wore a white sport coat & a pink carnation.

Sunday, we left Lake Charles for Hodges Gardens

<http://www.crt.state.la.us/parks/ihodges.aspx> a very formal private development by the Hodges family, but the 700 acres has been donated to the state. The gardens are complete with water falls and walkways. It is much more than Powell Gardens. We walked many of the pathways to see native plants, manicured natural displays, plus the lake is part of the complex. Very nice very nice and impressive. Go to the link and you will see.

Our next stop was to visit a delightful southern lady our age who resides in Shreveport, La. She has a huge southern home with flower garden and waterfall. Her name is Janie. She has trees that grow bananas and grapefruit. A true southern experience of friendship and stories. She told about one of her uncles who requested not to be buried near relatives, but to be buried next to his beloved horse Billy. Her daughter and daughter's husband have jobs in Kansas City, so we may see her real soon! If you have never met a true classic southern lady, Janie is it.

During our trip we visited three Native American locations: Poverty Point, the Adai Caddo Indian Nation Cultural Center, [www.adaiindiannation.com](http://www.adaiindiannation.com), Natchitoches, La. There are over 1200 tribal members across the country, however this nation is not recognized. Also, we visited the Ka-Do-Ha Village, Murfreesboro, Ark., a prehistoric site populated by Mound Builders about 1,000 years ago, [www.caddotc.com](http://www.caddotc.com).

Here are some shrimp and barge names we noticed of various boats near the ferry crossing at Cameron, La.: Willie Bugger, Dakonah Bill, Lachney Tide, Sea Horse XI, Gulf Shore Dance, Shark, My Rhoda, and Capt. Ralph. We rode on the ferry from Cameron called the Acadia.

Near Hackleberry, La. Is Cajun Joe's Bar, Cajun Joe is riding a huge red crawfish complete with saddle and bridle.

In Leesville, La., there is a daquiri station instead of a gas station. In Many, La., there is a sign that reads: "Sign broken" in front of church, and the sign continues, "Come into the Church to read the sign." (The sign wasn't broken)

Our last destination was "to dig for diamonds" Crater of Diamonds State Park, Murfreesboro, Ark. [www.CraterofDiamondsStatePark.com](http://www.CraterofDiamondsStatePark.com). We got our gear, small hand shovels and a dirt shifter. We crawled around only portions of the 40 acre crater (ancient volcano) crater field with others digging for carats of diamonds. The plowed crater field is full of determined families, campers, and folks like us just trying our luck by digging in dirt. We only brought home rocks called jasper and very little else. The experience taught us that looking for a needle in a haystack (mounds and mounts of dirt) is fun up to a point of determination. The Ka-Do-Ha Indian Village in the area is much more fun. It has an intricate museum of prehistoric artifacts and deep dug mounds where one can see skeletons, plus a muddy circle for everyone to look for arrowheads and keep them. I found no diamonds and no arrowheads.

The last day of trip is the usual way home: Hiway 71 to US-54, then Mo. 82, and then seeing the soft armor law enforcement gear at the sign of an armadillo. And, then near Vista and Osceola, there is still the tree with hanging snow shovels. Then, to Clinton and home by 1:30PM after lunch in Clinton. Scruffy is fine and so are the cats. Right now, back to normal and planning our next trip!

**One more observation, there is the No Hope, Scrub Cows, and Bitter Weed Ranch somewhere in La. Must add another: Saw my first real plantation near Lake Charles. It's called the Moon Shadows Plantation. And, there's more: Saw a sign advertising hot boudin sausage. Last trip I sucked the mushy sausage out of the sausage casing. That's the way one eats it. I even tried sucking the meat out of the crawfish's tail. Didn't try those dining treats again.**

**Also, I forgot three towns to mention: "Y", Ark., Pack Saddle, Ark., and Pencil Bluff, Ark.**

**Official detailed map route iterinary available by request. Besure to read the "blog" of our trip posted above. Thank you for enjoying our journal.**