

Hi, my name is Charlie Chaplin, but everyone calls me Chaplin. On January 9, we were finally ready for our first three-month trip south, but it turned out that the weather was not. A slight issue, a winter storm covered Kentucky, Tennessee, and even northern Alabama with three inches or more of snow. What we did not know yet, we also have a furnace that would not fire up, The two humans I travel with, Mike and Kathy, because of the weather and road conditions, decided to delay our departure by a few days to allow the road crews and in some places, the sun, to clear the roads.



After the two-day delay, it snowed again in southern Michigan, but thankfully, the snowfall wasn't significant. The next morning (Saturday, January 13), I could hear them discussing the driving conditions and concluded that the roads would be plowed by noon. We finally hit the road with clear skies, making our first of two "not-in-the-camper" stops: the Hilton Sparks, Shepherdsville (Ky), and the Hampton Inn, Montgomery (Al). The streets were free of snow and ice, making traveling a breeze.

We stopped for gas and a quick "walk" for me at the Sam's Club gas plaza in Fort Wayne, and then again for coffee just off I-69, where we took another short "walk." After all, dogs sometimes need lots of "walks." The day's scare happened as we approached Indianapolis when two cars, whose drivers seemed to think they were racing at the Indy 500, sped past us on both sides of our middle lane, going at least 90 miles per hour or faster. We slowed as they weaved in and out of traffic, a straightforward recipe for disaster. Unfortunately, tragedy struck when one car veered where it shouldn't have, clipping the other, spinning both to a stop. We didn't stop but

drove slowly past the wreckage and the dazed drivers. I looked at the chaos and quickly hid in the back of the truck. The last thing I wanted was to get caught in the aftermath, especially if guns were involved. As we passed Franklin (In), we found ourselves waving toward the Indiana Masonic Home Community Center, where Mike's mother spent her final days.

Sunday, January 12th

Finally, the ground snow began to lighten, which made everything much more manageable for me (and the humans). After passing through Nashville, we noticed the temperature started to climb, eventually reaching 50 degrees. I overheard my humans chatting with someone they had met who mentioned that Nashville received a foot of snow at once instead of the usual yearly 3 to 4 inches. While I can't picture what that looks like, I felt trapped in a snowy Michigan winter, even though we were headed to hoped-for sunny skies in Pensacola, Florida.

Monday, January 13th

Now in the Central Time Zone, we hit the road at 9:30 AM and arrived at our campground around 2 PM. Sign after sign let us know how far the next Buc-ee's was. A few words about one of the best gas plazas on the road: Buc-ee's, we had to stop to get gas from one of the 120 pumps, a pulled pork sandwich, and cookies. Growing up,



Mike read John Steinbeck's book Travels with Charley: In Search of America. Steinbeck had a fairly dismal view of America's developing interstate highway system. He observed that "these great roads are wonderful for moving goods but not for inspecting the countryside...You are bound to the wheel and your eyes to the

car ahead and the rear-view mirror ... the side mirror ..., at the same time, you must read all the signs for fear you may miss some instructions or orders. No roadside stands selling squash juice, no antique stores, no farm products or factory outlets will exist, when these thruways cross the whole country... it will be possible to drive from New York to California without seeing a single thing.” The roadside attractions that once littered the roadways of America are relegated to places off the modern-day beaten path. Is Buc-ee’s the kind of roadside stop that Steinbeck might have favored: perhaps not as the mom-and-pop diners, farm stands, and roadhouses with the coldest beer in a hundred miles are disappearing as Buc-ee’s and other “plazas” replace them. Buc-ee’s, a Texas-based convenience store chain, spreads across the southern states. Buc-ee’s – isn’t even a truck stop, since it doesn’t allow trucks, but is the latest iteration of the roadside oasis, the so-called “wide spot in the road” found in the middle of nowhere, albeit a wide spot where over a hundred gas pumps outnumber the kinds of jerky and has space enough for fifth wheels and extended campers to maneuver. As highway historian Richard F. Weingroff noted at the 100th anniversary of the Federal Highway Administration in 1993, railroads dominated cross-country travel in the last half of the 1800s. Before that, the prairie schooner and the Conestoga wagon carried travelers and supplies along the Oregon Trail and other trails across this great nation. Many of these trails, in 1952, became part of President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s Interstate System. His administration and Congress pushed through improvements in the national road system and other routes. Founded in Texas in 1982, and owned by Arch “Beaver” Aplin III and Don Wasek. Buc-ee’s is not only a 70,000-plus-square-foot store but also has excellent food, lots of gas pumps, and caters to the camper and automobile passenger. As we



traveled south, the Interstate was dotted with signs telling us “how many miles to the next Buc-ee’s.” While it may be hard to imagine what this new iteration of the roadside stop would have given him – and Charley, Buc-ee’s would have been something to see and a must stop-even for Steinbeck.

Arriving at the Gulf Shores/Pensacola West Lost Bay – 11650 CR 99, Lillian, AL 36549 (just across the bridge to Pensacola and its beautiful



white-sand beaches), we looked forward to a few weeks off the road at our first stop on the 2025 camping adventure and to address the sensor issue encountered in the Dometic furnace that wouldn’t ignite. We investigated whether or not we might be able to replace the Dometic



wall gauge with a digital one: it was unfeasible. On Tuesday, after consulting BISH technical support and watching a helpful video, the BISH team advised Mike to replace the furnace's motherboard, which he did.

Thankfully, the small space heater kept us warm in the camper. As a cavapoo, I



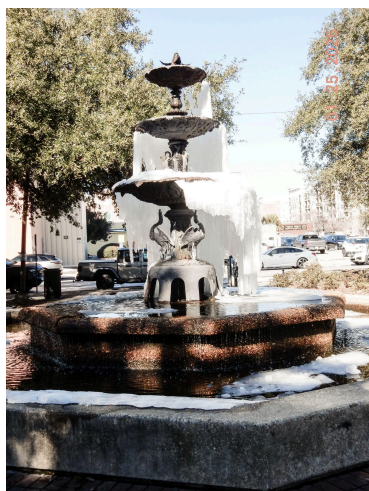
discovered that while snow can be fun, it gets between my toes and leaves me cold. Despite replacing the motherboard, the furnace still wouldn’t ignite. The 12V connection seemed faulty. When Mike checked the

Dometic furnace gauge, he noticed a stuck lever on the top right. After removing the case, the lever finally budged and moved to the left. Miraculously, the furnace

roared to life, effectively heating the camper. We now understand how to replace a "plug & play" motherboard in the camper, and we have two spare motherboards for future emergencies! The small electric heater kept maintaining a comfortable temperature.

Unfortunately, the weather wasn't great for beach outings or golfing, and seventy degrees seemed like a world away. The rest of the week, we explored various sites around Pensacola. Historically, European powers have always considered Pensacola Bay one of the most critical areas on the northern Gulf Coast. With depths ranging from 20 to 65 feet and extending about 13 miles, this bay provided excellent anchorage and safety for ships. Following the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819, Pensacola Bay became part of US territory when Spain ceded East and West Florida. In 1825, President James Monroe signed a law establishing a new navy yard and depot on the bay, leading to the creation of Fort Pickens, designed to defend the bay and the Pensacola Navy Yard from foreign attacks.

Our winter theme had been "chasing 70 degrees," and we were not even close.



The weather has not been conducive to spending time on the beach or the golf course. So many have asked just how cold it was. It was so cold that the fountain downtown in Pensacola froze. The rest of the week found the three of us trucking all over the place, going around Pensacola.

According to history, European powers long considered Pensacola Bay one of the most important on the northern Gulf Coast. With depths



ranging between 20 and 65 feet and about 13 miles, the bay afforded excellent anchorage and protection for ships. After the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819, also known as the Transcontinental Treaty, Spain ceded East and West Florida to the United States, and Pensacola Bay became part of US territory. In 1825, President James Monroe signed a law establishing a new navy yard and depot on the bay. Forts were needed to protect the natural bay and the navy yard, and thus, Fort Pickens was conceived. Fort Pickens was designed to defend Pensacola Bay and the Pensacola Navy Yard and Depot from foreign attacks. Fort Pickens stood to safeguard the democratic institutions of the Federal Republic and endures today as a symbol of the Union.

On Tuesday, a vortex swooped down from the North and brought snow that began falling at 10 a.m. and remained steady for several hours. The state's 130-year record for snowfall was shattered, which stuck around through Wednesday. According



to Jim Little, Troy Moon, Edward Bunch III, and Tom McLaughlin of the *Pensacola News Journal*, the “Storm of the Century” dropped 8.8 inches over the western Florida Panhandle. In Pensacola, the official snow measurement on Tuesday was 9.6 inches.

Unlike the northern states, which would have many plows out plowing and salting, this area without any equipment was brought to a near standstill as schools, government offices, retailers, and restaurants closed, as well as the Pensacola International Airport and, even though some roads and bridges were de-iced but there were no guarantees that the streets would remain open. Citizens were advised to hunker down whenever

possible. Of course, the weather began to warm; however, the nights remained cool. By



the time we left Pensacola, the temps during the day had climbed into the 60s, but we were still a long way from 70.

There is one place that all who go to Pensacola must visit: The [National Naval Aviation Museum](#) is the

world's largest Naval Aviation museum and one of the most-visited museums in Florida.

Share the excitement of Naval Aviation's rich history and see over 150 beautifully



restored aircraft representing Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard Aviation. These historic and one-of-a-kind aircraft are displayed inside the Museum's over 350,000 square feet of exhibit space and outside on its 37-acre grounds. The National Naval Aviation Museum is home to



tens of thousands of items and millions of documents that span the entire spectrum of Naval Aviation history. Through its Emil Buehler Naval Aviation Library, History Up Close series, online exhibits, and collections database, these items and the stories they tell can be

shared with researchers and the general public. Further, the

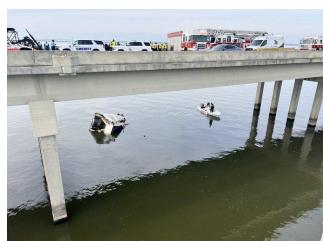


Naval Aviation Museum Foundation operates several educational programs at the Museum and the state-of-the-art National Flight Academy, designed to inspire children and adolescents to pursue excellence in science,

technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

New Orleans, LA

It was an easy pull-out from the campgrounds heading to the “Big Easy”, as we didn't need to do much except ensure all inside the camper were secure. With stops in Mississippi and Louisiana, we had under 300 miles before finding our way to New Orleans. A significant slowdown occurred as we entered New Orleans and drove across the Lake Pontchartrain Bridge. According to the New Orleans Police Department and the St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Office, a box truck crashed into a flatbed truck,



causing the box truck to fall off the I-10 Twin Span bridge and into Lake Pontchartrain. We were on the bridge around 2 pm in the westbound lanes of the Twin Span when the crash happened. According to investigators and online sources, a box truck traveling in the far right lane struck a flatbed truck from behind, causing the box truck to veer off the bridge and into the water.

We discovered that the box truck driver managed to escape and was rescued by a nearby boater. The driver of the flatbed truck was not injured. Initial reports suggested another vehicle was also involved and had gone over the bridge's side and into the water. At first, the driver could not be found, and the police believed the car was under the truck. However, after pulling the box truck out of the water, they confirmed that no other vehicles were submerged. The mystery: did another car go over the side and into the lake? Welcome to New Orleans, where it's 65 degrees; no second vehicle exists.

Today (Thursday, the 30th), Kathy spent considerable time tracking down some mail that had been lost due to the southern storm, which affected the entire south and halted progress for everyone. Yesterday afternoon, I took my humans on a driving tour through the French Quarter, including a visit to the Bourbon Street blockage, a 12-block

historic street known for its vibrant nightlife, music, entertainment scene, and atmosphere. Bourbon Street invented the “go cup,” allowing noisy, raucous, and nocturnal individuals to continue to party “hardy” from place to place. We woke to beautiful 70+ degrees and light winds, but not as light as the day before.

Friday (Jan 31). Besides realizing that we had landed in Super Bowl City, we finally planned to play nine holes of golf and headed to Audubon Golf Course, a par-62 course similar to an executive course.

On Monday, we visited the only US national park in the area, *Jean Lafitte*



National Historical Park and Preserve. Of course, I loved walking through the gardens as I got to sniff to my heart's content, but I had to stay on a very short lease. I was told that “the local alligators loved small

dogs.” I must admit that this knowledge sobered me and made me very aware, as one does not want to become gator bait. The park is approximately 15 miles south of River Ridge (where the camper is parked) in Marrero, LA. The opening to the six areas of the park indicated that in Jean Lafitte's day, silver and gold filled a pirate's treasure chest; today's treasures are people, places, and memories. Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve allows us to discover New Orleans’ rich cultural mix: alligators basking on a bayou’s bank, walking in the footsteps of those who fought at the 1815 Battle of New Orleans, and discovering the beauty of the Louisiana swamps are just a few things one can do. We walked along the boardwalk over the swamps and marshes, passing through forest areas.

Jean Lafitte's six parks are scattered over six sites across south Louisiana, each with a unique focus. We visited the Barataria Preserve outside Marrero, which offered a



glimpse into Louisiana's unique wetlands. The preserve's 26,000 acres include bayous, swamps, marshes, forests, and over 200 species of birds. Admission to the preserve is free.

On Tuesday (Feb 4), a dog-sitting service was secured so my humans could visit



the World War II museum. Initially, the museum was called the D-Day Museum, but it has since changed its name. The museum is located in New Orleans because the landing craft used to land on Normandy Beach was built in the "Big Easy." Senior general

admission tickets are \$33 each. The National WWII Museum relates the story of the American experience in the immersive tour of World War II, which changed the world.



Through exhibits, multimedia, and personal presentations, the museum presents an understanding of the price and meaning of freedom. This is a map of the content of the seven (7) different buildings.



The first building is the Louisiana Memorial Pavilion, which features the museum's original D-Day exhibit. Opened in June 2017 at the Louisiana Memorial Pavilion, *The Arsenal of Democracy* creates a living

picture of the road to war and the Home Front, drawing on personal narratives and evocative artifacts to highlight facets of WWII-era American life through an experiential narrative.

Building Two, the Solomon Victory Theater, features an exclusive movie, *Beyond All Boundaries*, at the National World War II Museum's Solomon Victory Theater. This Museum-produced experience is narrated by executive producer Tom Hanks, with Phil Hetteema serving as show producer and creative director. *Beyond All Boundaries* features dazzling effects, CGI animation, multilayered environments, and first-person accounts from the trenches to the Home Front, read by Brad Pitt, Tobey Maguire, Gary Sinise, Patricia Clarkson, Wendell Pierce, and other notable actors.

Building Three is the Campaigns of Courage: European and Pacific Theaters, which, in my opinion, is the most critical theater and the first place to begin. The building follows the footsteps of the citizen-soldier in 360-degree displays that take the audience through all the key settings of World War II, serving as an immersive timeline and providing a service member's view of the war. *The Road to Berlin* brought to life the drama, sacrifices, personal stories, and strategies of America's campaign in defeating the Axis powers; the *Road to Tokyo: Pacific Theater Galleries* retraced the grueling trail from Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay by way of New Guinea and Southeast Asia, the Himalayas, Burma, where Mike's dad served in the India/Burma theater, the islands of the Pacific, China, India, and Alaska.

The exploration of the end of World War II was contained in *Building Four*: the Liberation Pavilion. This explored the final days of WWII, the Holocaust (Anne Frank), faith in wartime, and the postwar years, plus the sacrifices of the WWII generation, of

which now, in 2025, only about 60,000 vets exist. Stories of loss and liberation reveal the true horror of the conflict as victors and vanquished alike began rebuilding their shattered world. The second floor of the Liberation Pavilion features the *exhibitions "Forces of Freedom at Home and Abroad (1945–Present)"* by the Goldring Family Foundation and the Woldenberg Foundation, which explores the war's impact in the postwar period and its lasting legacies today. Exhibits examine the rebuilding efforts of a world destroyed through the Marshall Plan and assist Germany in getting its economy straightened out. Other exhibits investigate the war crimes trials, the emergence of the United States as a world "superpower," the movements for social change and civil rights, new technological innovations, and the war's impact on foreign policy.

As an aside, one small detail back at the campgrounds is the cost of doing the laundry and the cost of machines at each campground. This campground had good machines: the washer was \$2.00, and the dryer was \$1.75. On February 9th, we packed up and headed to Montgomery, AL, and the Backyard RV Resort.

Montgomery, AL



This first day in Montgomery was no different. We piled into the truck and performed reconnaissance throughout the area.

Friday (Feb 14) found us visiting the Hank Williams Museum (tickets \$15.00 ea).

Mike started listening to Hank Williams when he was enrolled at Western Kentucky University (then a state college) in 1962. Hank was mourned, "many would say", almost more than when John F. Kennedy died. Even through Williams' life's



hardships, he seemed to rejoice every second while on this earth, and his music left the world a better place. After all, country music is mostly stories set to verse and music.

Williams put all of his experiences into song lyrics. Several biographers say, “Hank Williams was a simple earth-farming boy from the fields of Alabama who happened to inscribe his name on the tablet of time.” The Hank Williams Museum, as stated on its website, is not a tourist stop, but a step back into the life of country music’s first superstar: Hank Williams. While I had to stay in the truck, I know my humans enjoyed the charm of the Museum and his music, as well as the artifacts from his life, including the 1952 baby blue Cadillac. Hank Williams is a treasure to the City of Montgomery and the State of Alabama. An excellent tribute to William’s life and his music allows for this magnificent, unique landmark.



According to the website, the Hank Williams museum is 6000 sq ft and houses his 1952 Baby Blue Cadillac, in which he made his final journey, along with suits, boots, hats, ties, awards, furniture, a horse saddle, portraits, records, albums, and other authentic items. Hank Williams' grave, Montgomery, AL

After visiting the museum and his grave site, one realizes how much living Hank Williams packed into his twenty-nine years. Perhaps the difficulty, after visiting the museum, “was understanding how a man who possessed such a natural gift could produce this abundance of musical wealth in a few short years with a total disregard for proper rest, relaxation, or moderation, even to the extent of his untimely death” (The Hank Williams Museum).

On Saturday (Feb 15), golfing became the activity, all of us headed to Gateway Park, a municipal golf course near the Backyard RV resort. I did not have to stay in the golf cart and at times could roam around as they played a hole or two. The course was an interesting track.

On Sunday (Feb. 16), the group, as I was allowed to accompany Mike and Kathy wearing my “service” badge, we visited *The Legacy* and *The National Memorial for Peace and Justice*, which is set on a six-acre site. *The National Memorial for Peace and Justice* is the nation’s first comprehensive memorial dedicated to the victims of racial terror. This outdoor memorial uses sculpture, art, and design to contextualize racial terror.



The 17-acre outdoor memorial, built on the banks of the Alabama River, explores enslaved people's experiences in America.

The world-class sculptures animated an unforgettable historical journey culminating in a first-of-its-kind monument honoring

enslaved people in the U.S.

The Legacy Sites invite visitors to come to grips with the history of racial injustice in places where that history was lived and experienced. The various Legacy Sites are situated on lands occupied by Indigenous people and in the region that once held the largest population of enslaved Black people, which would later become the heart of the Civil Rights movement. *The Legacy Sites* offer a powerful opportunity to engage with

history. As a nonprofit lawyer, in 1989, Bryan Stevenson, according to the Legacy Sites website, was instrumental in *the Equal Justice Initiative* that represents clients sentenced to death and condemned to die in prison. In addition, *Equal Justice* challenges inhumane conditions of confinement and works to expose racial bias, discrimination, and the inequality deeply rooted in America's history and today's criminal legal system. *The Legacy Site* aims to foster a new era of truth and justice in America.



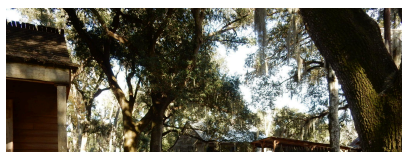
The more one moved through the National Memorial for Peace and Justice (one of three Legacy sites), the more one was consumed by how and who started this enslavement. Who thought about going to Africa— kidnapping humans, bringing them back to America, and forcing them

into a working living hell? It is estimated that over two million people died during the passage to foreign lands, and the global trafficking that separated millions of women, men, and children from their homes, families, and cultures destabilized African countries and left them vulnerable to conquest, colonization, and violence for centuries. The trafficking of African people permanently shaped coastal communities across the U.S. Local economies in New England, Boston, New York City, the Mid-Atlantic, Virginia, Richmond, the Carolinas, Charleston, Savannah, the Deep South, and New Orleans



were built around the enslavement of various races of people but particularly Black people. These people were kidnapped, trafficked, abused, and dehumanized for different

occupations and industries. The Transatlantic Slave Trade generated the capital to build some of America's greatest cities, most successful companies, and enormous family



wealth. Slavery in America has not ended, but evolved.



A major player in this slave trade was Montgomery and its

slave trade. Between 1501 and 1867, millions of

African people were kidnapped, enslaved, and

trafficked across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas, including the British, French, and Spanish colonies

that would later comprise the United States. For many

centuries, the enslavement of Black people in the United States created wealth,



opportunity, and prosperity for millions of Americans. As

American slavery evolved, an elaborate and enduring

mythology about the inferiority of Black people was

designed to legitimize, perpetuate, and defend slavery.

This mythology survived the formal abolition of slavery

following the Civil War. In the South, where the

enslavement of Black people was widely embraced,

resistance to ending slavery persisted for another

century after the 13th Amendment passed in 1865. In

many communities similar to Montgomery,



Alabama—which by 1860 was the capital of the

domestic slave trade in Alabama—there is little understanding of the slave trade,

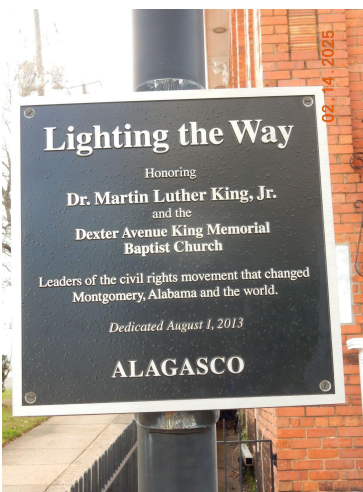
slavery, or the longstanding effort to sustain the racial hierarchy that slavery created.

According to some Southern community leaders at the Dexter Ave Baptist Street



Church, such as Dr. Martin Luther King, an alternative narrative has emerged that celebrates the slavery era, honors slavery's principal proponents and defenders, and refuses to acknowledge or address the problems created by the legacy of slavery. Historic scholars wrote that after the Civil War, Confederate veterans, former enslavers, and other white leaders organized a reign of terror to enshrine white

supremacy, nullify Black voting rights, and exploit Black labor. During Reconstruction,



lawlessness and violence perpetrated created an American future of racial hierarchy, white supremacy, and Jim Crow laws. The three different sites of the *Legacy Sites* are: *The Legacy Museum*, *The National Memorial for Peace and Justice*, and the *Freedom Monument Sculpture Park*.

According to today's statistics, mass incarceration, racially biased capital punishment, excessive and disproportionate sentencing of racial minorities, and police abuse of people of

color can be traced back to the terror era.

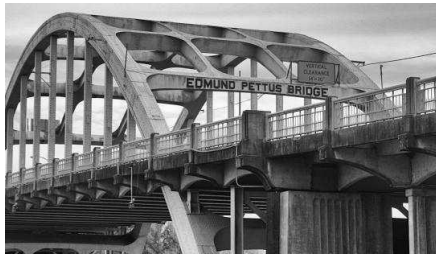
After all this negative history, I was very happy my humans took me to play nine holes at Shadow Ridge Golf Course, an excellent local golf course.

Hattiesburg, MS

The cold weather would just not leave us alone. The bad news about the Backyard RV Resort was that the rain's downfall almost flooded us out. On February



18th, we headed to Hattiesburg, MS, some 250 miles further south on Tuesday [Feb. 18] in an attempt to get rid of the cold and rain. However, that move did not eliminate the cold or the rain. However, on Tuesday, we were greeted by sunshine, no rain, and 60 degrees or higher. On the trip down, we went through Selma (a poor town), famous for the 1960s Selma Voting Rights Movement and the Selma to Montgomery marches.

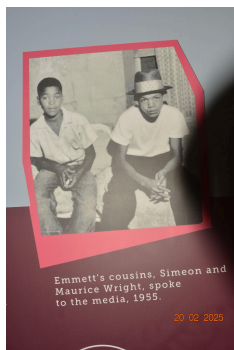


In March 1965, only three TV networks were available: CBS, ABC, and NBC, which covered the march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma and to Montgomery. Ultimately, twenty-five thousand marchers entered Montgomery to press for voting rights; however, this did not occur until the third march, which began on March 21 with protection from military police and Army troops. The first march led by Dr. King (Martin Luther King) was turned back at the Pettus Bridge by a court order that prevented the marchers from marching from Selma to Montgomery.

Getting to the campground took much longer than estimated, as the GPS gave us a strange “around-the-world” route to the Hattiesburg/Okatoma KOA Holiday campgrounds. As we checked in, Mike mentioned that to the front desk, and she replied, “Didn’t you check your phone for a text? We sent you a text with directions, so you should not use your GPS.” Thanks, I said, and sure enough, there was a text with the proper directions.

The next day the rain caught us again, and we just used the day to investigate Hattiesburg—Wow, a Walmart, Sam's Club, and Dick's. We did not realize that this community has the fourth-largest population in Mississippi. Notably, the state's interior development occurred during the Civil War. Before that time, only properties along the major rivers were developed as plantations. Hattiesburg was named for the founders' wife, Hattie, and is nicknamed "The Hub City." Hattiesburg is also a college town, home to several small colleges, but the primary college is the University of Southern Mississippi, which is known for its strong teacher preparation programs.

Thursday (Feb 20). Before we left, Mike read Wright Thompson's book, *The*



Barn – the story of the murder of Emmett Till, a 14-year-old black child. This is Till and his cousin.

The story outlined the events that took place on the night of August 28, 1955. In addition, the principal individuals involved were identified, and others brought the truth to light. Emmitt Till's murder has become

a symbol of discrimination, was one of the most infamous in American history, and exposed to the world deep-seated Southern racism, which still exists in many places just below the surface. What Mike found odd is that, although Wright Thompson, the author, grew up just a few miles from the Barn, he knew nothing of it until he left Mississippi – just an illustration of how deep the cover-up continues.



Emmett III Interpretive Center in Drew, MS

Over his five years of research, Thompson learned that every part of the standard account of Till's killing was

wrong. To summarize the murder: In the summer of 1955, 14-year-old African-American Emmett Till had gone on vacation from Chicago to visit family in Money, Mississippi. He was shopping at a store owned by Roy and Carolyn Bryant, and someone said he possibly whistled at Mrs. Bryant, a white woman.

At some point around August 28, he was kidnapped, beaten, shot in the head, had a large metal fan tied to his neck with barbed wire, and was thrown into the

Tallahatchie River. His body was soon recovered, and an investigation was opened. It took fewer than four weeks for the case to go to trial: Roy Bryant and his half-brother, J.W. Milam,



site of the Milam house

Bryant and his half-brother were accused of murder, and an all-white, all-male jury acquitted both of them. No one else was ever indicted or prosecuted for involvement in the kidnapping or murder. Bryant and Milam, who today are long deceased, later



confessed and told a magazine journalist all the grisly details of their crime.

court for the Till trial

Feb. 25, our last full day in Hattiesburg, the weather finally became sunny and warm. It allowed us to head for the Longleaf Trace, South Mississippi's premier trail for



running, biking, hiking, and equestrian use. The Longleaf is



a beautiful 44-mile linear park extending from Hattiesburg through Sumrall, Bassfield, and Carson to Prentiss. A Rails-To-Trails conversion trail is 10 feet wide and paved.

Panama City Beach (PCB), Florida

The next day, we were up and on our way to seventy degrees of warmth and sun: Panama City Beach (PCB), Florida. We jogged through Mobile on US-98, made our way to Pensacola (I-10), decided to take US-98 across to Destin and PCB instead of staying on I-10, and finally dropped to PCB on US-331. That was a mistake; we encountered all kinds of traffic, and I'm not sure if it cost us time, but it certainly felt like it. We did not get to the PCB KOA Holiday campgrounds until a few minutes before 6 PM. Finally, seventy degrees and warm winds.



We spent some time going to Dog Beach, which welcomes dogs on the beach in PCB. Panama City Beach offers many trails, making it an ideal biking destination.

Numerous marked bike trails meandered throughout PCB, revealing the stunning beauty of the region's beaches, bays, and wildlife. There are 12 dirt trails, with some sandy spots, that crisscross 2,900 acres of preserved wilderness and cypress domes, ranging from 0.6 to 11 miles. We made several outings and discovered some of the best bike trails Panama City Beach has to offer, such as Gayle's

Trails, which provides three routes totaling 19.5 miles round trip along flat, paved trails. The trail's west end connects to another excellent place: Conservation Park.

Heading North

On Thursday, March 13, we packed up and headed north, with our first stop being back at the Backyard RV Resort in Montgomery, AL, as we had to pick up some prescriptions that were not forwarded to PCB. We stayed the night at the Backyard RV Resort and had dinner at a favorite place: Baumhower's Victory Grille. The following day (March 14th), we were up early and headed out quickly to keep ahead of the weather for a stopover in Nashville, TN. The Grand Ole RV Resort & Market (Goodlettsville, TN) was tremendous and offered dinner food that we ordered and ate at the desk, accompanied by good oldies played by a trio. This would be an excellent place to stay for a couple of days, with visits to the Grand Ole Opry and other notable sights in Nashville. Of course, it rained that night, and some of us quickly headed out to Lake Haven Retreat (Indianapolis, IN) to visit my niece (Megan), Tom, her husband, and family. We arrived in the rain and left the following morning in cold. Not much about Lake Haven campgrounds to report other than cold and common. The weather kept everyone in their campers. Besides, we were just staying for one night, and our plans called for us to meet Tom and Megan's family for Mexican food and spend a few hours catching up. On March 16, after almost three months on the road, we finally arrived at the beginning of this adventure: back home.

