

Flying Carpets...My most recent magic carpet ride... Part #1...Part #2...Glad I missed the sign...View from another Planet

All, I thoroughly enjoy driving. I've always thought of an automobile as the closest thing to a magic carpet. And cars are almost as easy to use as a magic carpet. With magic carpets all you have to do is sit down on them, tell them where you want to go, and you're there. Cars are not that different. Get in the car, sit down, and direct all the mechanical electronic apparatus at your disposal to take you wherever you want to go. Easy peasy.

My most recent magic carpet ride... Part #1

The trip to North Potomac, Maryland to visit Ciara was quite simple. Interstates all the way. The only time I felt somewhat lost was in South Bend. Of course, having not been there since 1972, I couldn't relate to the mini-metropolis that has become. Next time will be easier because I know that I have to take Exit 77, off the Indiana Toll Road, make a couple of left hand turns to arrive at the Inn of St. Mary.

Once I got to Maryland I noticed how dense the traffic was. That was a bit of a jolt. Nevertheless, I had no difficulty finding Ciara's place.

Part #2...

The return ride to Wisconsin was virtually effortless. Except for some fog in Indiana everything was fine. I figured out a way to drive in fog with minimal danger. Follow a tractor-trailer. Reason is very simple. The Teamster driving a tractor-trailer sits high above the rest of the traffic. Consequently, even in lower visibility situations, the Teamster will have a good idea of how the traffic should be flowing. Just don't follow too closely.

The Interstate Highway system is great. But it is far too predictable to be interesting. Unless I'm driving through a very interesting landscape, I don't find anything engaging to look at. I reach a point where I am almost wishing that we still had lots of billboards along the highway. They were informative, often providing a lot of information about the territory you are passing through.

Another predictable feature of the interstate toll roads would be the service plazas. You can always find something to eat, usually from a national franchise, and priced so that you are completely aware of the fact that you're a captive audience. Always too much. The restrooms are usually well taken care of. Gasoline is priced a little bit higher than what you might anticipate. But if you need it, you going to pay for it.

A real plus for using toll roads is the electronic payment system that many states now offer. For me, they work all the way from Wisconsin to the Atlantic Ocean. No wasting time in line to pay tolls with cash. Cannot just assume through. (You have to wait for a toll gate to be lifted at many of the exits. In Ohio, I came very close to missing this feature. Hit the brakes in time.)

Glad I missed the sign...

My return to Wisconsin plan was to take Interstate 94 head to Rockford, Illinois, on the Wisconsin border, then continue on to Black River Falls. Things didn't go quite according to plan. Somehow, probably being distracted by the radio, I took an exit the copy off of Interstate 94. It took be very little time to realize that I had made an error because I found myself going through a series of small Illinois towns.

If I did not have the Waze system, I might've been flummoxed. I wasn't. Instead of trying to find my way back to the interstate I decided to let the GPS guide to me on a new route home. Glad I did.

The first group of towns that I passed through abutted each other. The only way to discover that I had gone from one town to another was by observing the changes in street signs. Each town had its own style. To a point.

However, the sameness of each town struck me. Same franchises. Same small businesses. Same medical centers. Same shopping centers. Same local color bars and restaurants. Although everything looked "the same" to me I'm sure that each town was unique to the people living there. (Note: I grew up in an area where the main drag it was Haddon Avenue. Extended from Camden New Jersey to Haddonfield New Jersey. It passed through Camden, Collingswood, Haddon Township/Westmont, terminating in Haddonfield. Each of these places, to an outsider would look very similar. But to those of us who lived in Haddon Township/Westmont, we knew the difference. And I suppose the people in the adjacent towns did as well.)

View from another planet....

While riding along I begin daydreaming about how this planet would look like to someone observing us from outer space, i.e., from another planet. This observer might notice the abundance of life here. They might look for patterns, too.

If they focused on animals other than the human animal they would probably notice that each species would create its own habitat to the extent possible unless the human animal intervened by destroying a habitat. They might also notice that a unique characteristic of each species was that they generally built homes/nesting places/dens/whatever in a similar fashion for themselves.

The sameness of places that we create, at least the places that I saw on this little detour made me wonder why it does all look the same. Then I got thinking. We are animals, too. And it is not surprising to notice that we build places that are similar to each other, whether homes, stores, malls, etc. just the way animals build similar structures for themselves. It's just that we are often little more destructive than the animals are when it comes to the environment. The way things are going, it's quite possible that the animals will have the last laugh.

First yawn...

Until tomorrow...

Ken

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