

Oiling The Turnpike

We were living in Ridgefield, CT in 1957 as we prepared for our annual 2,000 mile Christmas pilgrimage to Missouri and Oklahoma to visit families and friends. During the preceding week I had taken our Ford station wagon in for lubrication, oil change and a general check up. To save money we were planning to drive straight through. Because of that we were preparing comfortable sleeping arrangements for our three children in the back of the wagon. After a light supper we hit the road early Friday evening.

We were making good progress until about midnight on the Pennsylvania Turnpike. I was dismayed when the red oil pressure light on the dashboard began flashing. I slowed to the lowest speed that I thought to be safe, and pulled into the next service station. The oil was two quarts low! In addition adding the two quarts I purchased a gallon of oil, and we hit the road. For the rest of the night it was a matter of filling up, stopping along the road to add more to get to the next service station.

About dawn Saturday morning I pulled off the turnpike into Michigan City, Indiana and found a garage which was open. The mechanic quickly found that the engine was ready for the junk yard. No engines were available locally, so he had to have one brought in. He wanted payment for the engine before he placed the order, and this presented us with a new problem. We didn't have that much money quickly available to us. Mary called her mother in Missouri to ask her if she could wire us the money. She could, and she did. The mechanic took us to a motel, for we would be there for at least one night.

We went to the movies that evening to see Doris Day in "Please Don't Eat the Daisies." After the movie we each had a soda. Our oldest son, Bob, was not feeling well and didn't finish his, so I finished it. Bob's illness was diagnosed the next day as mumps. Later in the trip Don got them.

After leaving Michigan City and approaching Chicago the next problem arose. Severe flooding had occurred in the Chicago area, and many of the major roads were closed. I began exploring secondary roads and found one which showed some promise. It was an almost continuous pothole. A local citizen with a sense of humor had posted a hand painted sign proclaiming, "Danger! Ten Thousand Jolts."

We made it to Mount Vernon, Missouri for a very pleasant Christmas with Mary's family. Later we went to Enid, Oklahoma, my to visit my parents. The return trip was less hectic, but it had its moments. The Pennsylvania Turnpike was snow covered or icy for much of its length. Back in Ridgefield Sarah came down with mumps and later I had my turn. I was about as sick as one can be and survive.

It was an unforgettable trip!