

Reflections on a Bike Trip to Washington DC - May 1999 by Gary D. Moore

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The trip to "DC" was a trip. Indeed, a grand trip. Day one, hurried and strenuous...over 500 miles on the bike. Day two, West Virginia route 119 to US 50, and then on to Fairfax (Virginia). Over one hundred miles filled with more stunning beauty than can be described. However, read on.

The chill of the near freezing mountain morning temperature stung my face, hands, and seeped into bulky leather clothing as my motorcycle went up, down, and around rock outcroppings, through forests, and quaint country corners with odd names. Each mile was full of picturesque natural beauty that revived spirit, mind, and weary body. The striking beauty could easily adorn calendar pages.

Throaty motorcycle pipes disturbed tranquil locales that survived onslaughts of foreigner invaders. However, I was not the only two-wheeled vehicle on this slow moving road...many bikers passed going the opposite direction...waving as they motored to unknown destinations. The ride on US 50 was slow, but superb. Rush hour traffic is always a rush anywhere inside the loop, but my ride was opposite from everyone. Riding into DC was easy. Only minor traffic congestion as I exited to Silver City (Arlington, VA) on Friday.

Allow me to digress about my second day. Prior to starting, I talked with a local resident. The fellow biker assured me that "better" riding is on freeway to Maryland. He said that US 50 was nice, but...I would see more country by traveling the freeway. However, after five minutes motoring WV-119, I realized that what was common to him, was stimulating and new to me. The twists, turns, ups, and downs were like Lake Huron is to residents who live beside that grand great lake. The lake is beautiful, but always there. For most of us who live near the Great Lakes...we take the huge blue fresh water seas for granted.

(Note: My nephews (from Arizona) sat very quietly for preteens, on huge stones of the harbor in Lexington, Michigan (where I was born). To them, that expanse of the fresh water lake, was a rare and beautiful site. That instance of sitting with my nephews made me think about the area that I took for granted.)

Friday night at the Wall (Vietnam Memorial) is my favorite of the three day Memorial Day weekend for sundry personal reasons. Veterans and friends gather in silence at the black granite monument. It is always a moving, memorable, and singularly unique experience.

Scurrying around Washington DC on Saturday, was miserably hot. Temperatures stayed in the highs 90s combined with high humidity. Air conditioned venues were the favorite hangout except for the protest outside the Vietnamese embassy. Sunday morning 6 a.m. was line up in front of the hotel. I saw three friends, and quickly told them about my "parking lot" duty (to assure that only the lead group parked motorcycles in that lot). My buddies tagged along. We endured sweltering heat (and several bottles of water) until the exodus began at noon. The ride to the baseball field around DC was go, faster, and stop...go, faster, and stop. Parking the motorcycle, and a quick walk to the assembly area for the ceremony concluded my day.

Memorial Day was check out time. The ride to the Blue Ridge Parkway passed quickly. Gas and a late breakfast at Rockfish Gap was unhurried. A fellow vet introduced himself and his wife. My regret is that I forgot his name and where he lived (in West Virginia). I stopped later that day when I tried to recall it...should have written his name down immediately. Ugh!

Payment for riding the Blue Ridge Parkway is worth every cent. Cruising along at less than 40 m.p.h. is delightful and every bit as invigorating as my US 50 ride. The heat of DC was replaced with mountain crisp, coolness, and an array of unique fragrances. The Blue Ridge Parkway is many, many miles long. My May 1999 trip was the third on that splendid stretch of road. Each time the meandering ride is unique. It is a route that I do not get weary of riding.

The 1999 bike trip was excellent. Yes, it was grand!