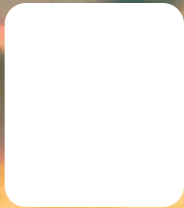




# NORTHERN PLAINS JUSTICE

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## A Salute to Road Trips

By Bill Sims

As a lifelong fan of cars, I've also been a lifelong fan of road trips. I'm a big believer that cars were made to be driven. They aren't for museums or showrooms. For this issue, we pause on our normal articles to celebrate the great American tradition of the summertime road trip by highlighting one of each team member's favorite memories on the road.

One of my favorites was a nearly 4,000-mile route I drove in 2006. I was living at Grand Forks AFB, North Dakota and needed to attend two training classes for work, one in San Antonio, Texas followed by another in Montgomery, Alabama. I drove alone in my Honda Accord the whole way, just the open road and a primitive version of XM Radio connected to my car though a cassette player.

Leaving in February, it was still very cold and very snowy. I recall gaining about 10 degrees for every 5 hours of travel south. It was wonderful to leave below zero temps for the mid-50's of Texas! Along the way, I spent nights in Kansas City and Dallas with family. Needless to say, barbecued meat was the order of the day for both stays!

After a week, I set out for Montgomery. I recall traveling through Louisiana on I-10, seeing a tremendous amount of damage with

communities reeling from the effects of Hurricane Katrina. I stopped to spend the night in Mobile, Alabama. Amazingly, I ran into an old friend at the hotel. Together we enjoyed the best seafood we've ever had at a little place built on stilts in Mobile Bay. We ate shrimp caught that day right outside the window that we sat next to. The next day we caravanned to Montgomery.

After another great training class, it was time to head back north. 1,500 miles along a different route, this time with no family stays. Just the open road, music, and fun sites to see along the way. I love small town claims to fame like the world's largest frying pan, ball of twine, or chicken! Trips like those are full of them.

I love the variety America has to offer. Dinah Shore told us in 1953 to, "See the USA in your Chevrolet." This summer, I echo her advice. Whether it is your Chevrolet, Ford, BMW, Honda, Tesla, or any other car, get out there and put some miles on it! There's so much to see and so many memories to create.



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SUMMER 2025

## Summer Road Trip Memories

by Dan Amert

I was thinking back to a road trip I took back in 2010. For the longest time, I wanted to see Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming and the Little Big Horn Battlefield in Montana. For one reason or another, I'd never done the trip. I finally set aside time off from work, packed up, and organized to go. At about 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, August 28th, I took off from Sioux Falls and headed towards Montana to see the Little Big Horn battlefield. Custer's Last Stand has fascinated me most of my life. I've read many books and watched many movies about what happened at the Little Big Horn. I arrived too late on Saturday evening and thunderstorms were approaching.

I spent most of Sunday, August 29th walking or driving parts of the battlefield, seeing the markers, the memorials, the locations of specific skirmishes, and Custer's headstone. Of all the sights that day, walking up the battlefield entrance and seeing Last Stand Hill for the first time, covered with headstones of where Custer and his troops fell was very sobering. To be there brought at the battlefield so much history I had read before to life.

The next day, August 30th, I left Billings, Montana heading for Yellowstone National Park. I took a roadway called Beartooth Highway. The highway is only open from about Memorial Day into October each year. The Beartooth Highway is one of those places that is hard to describe, but it's something to be seen and appreciated. Of course, this was the first time I had driven by myself in high mountains.

During the drive, it started to snow as I climbed further into the mountains. I was driving through winding switchbacks, watching campers and trucks coming in the other lane. The temperature dropped significantly, and my hands started to shiver. I decided to turn the heat on in my car. As I was turning the temperature knob, the knob broke, leaving me with no heat! I remember stopping at the Wyoming/Montana border at a porta-potty rest stop. As I watched it snowing in August, I remember saying, "What in the hell am I doing here?" I did continue, the snow cleared, and I made it to Yellowstone!

I spent the day driving through Yellowstone National Park. Yellowstone is also hard to describe, seeing the mountains, the vistas, waterfalls, herds of buffalo, herds of elk, geysers, and hot springs. I did see Old Faithful that day, but I had to wait for some time before seeing Old Faithful go off. Yellowstone brings its appreciation of the impressive beauty preserved at our first National Park. In the distance south of Yellowstone, I saw the splendor of the Grand Tetons.

As I headed out of Yellowstone in the evening light, I remember seeing a sign on the highway asking drivers to be aware of bears (which I didn't see). The landscape was something right out of a Western movie, high cliffs dominate each side of the roadway, weaving and cutting through ancient rock formations.

I was so grateful I made this road trip happen! We at Northern Plains Justice hope you and your family will have memorable road trips this summer and create memories lasting a lifetime!



# A Family Road Trip

by Michelle Hulme

One of my favorite family road trips took place in the summer of 2010, which we have now nick-named our Griswold Family Vacation. My husband and I decided to take our kids on a big family road trip starting in Sioux Falls, heading south to San Antonio, TX, then over to the Florida panhandle, and finally up to Knoxville, TN before heading back home. I remember it required a lot of planning on my part since we were going to be on the road for almost 2 weeks with 3 young kids in tow.

Having kids ages 7, 5, and 3 meant needing lots of snacks and entertainment. I remember having a portable DVD player set up on the back of our headrests so the kids could watch movies during the drive. They also had their own headsets so that my husband and I didn't go crazy listening to all the kids' movies that they played.

We had some long days driving in our old 2005 Dodge minivan that was filled to the brink with luggage, a big cooler, and wires all over the place from the DVD player and headsets, but we ended up having the best time. It took us 11 hours on the first day to go from Sioux Falls to Oklahoma City but everyone got along great. Then we went to San Antonio where we stayed for 3 days and took the kids to Sea World, the Alamo and along the Riverwalk.

After our time in Texas we ventured toward the Florida panhandle stopping for lunch in New Orleans along the way. We stayed for 3 days in Florida with my brother and spent much of our time at the beach which our kids loved. Then we headed north and made our way to my sister-in-law's home in Knoxville, TN. Another 3 days were spent with family there where we enjoyed hiking in the Smokey Mountains and touring a cave with a lake in it.

Finally we made our way through St Louis, MO where we stopped to go up in the Arch before heading home. That was probably the most stressful part of the road trip because our windshield wipers broke while it was pouring rain in downtown St Louis, but we survived.

Overall, it ended up being a great family road trip. We loved seeing the change in scenery as we drove through different states in the U.S. I'm hoping for the same luck this summer because we have decided to hit the road again with our 3 kids (now ages 22, 20 and 18) to go to Mackinac Island, MI. I'm sure it will be a much different experience with 3 adult kids this time around but I'm looking forward to having our kids with us in a car for all those hours now that they are busy and we don't get to spend as much time together. Hoping to make more great memories together on the road once again!



## Training Camp Road Trip

by Angie Richmond

One of my favorite road trips was going to the Minnesota Vikings training camp with my son, 9-year-old grandson, and 8-year-old granddaughter in August 2022. We left home the morning of training camp and drove to the TCO Performance Center in Egan, MN. Once we arrived, the kids flew out of the car with their Viking's jersey's on and a lot of built-up excitement only to wait in line for nearly an hour to get through the gate.

My grandson is a huge Justin Jefferson fan and was quite impatient waiting for the gates to open. He was focused on getting to the Autograph Zone to sign up for Justin's autograph line. By the time we made it to the Autograph Zone, Justin's line was full. We were able to get KJ Osborn's autograph and we saw Justin at a nearby table, which was not a total disappointment. My granddaughter got an autograph as well, but the player did not make it on the roster that season, and I do not recall his name.

The TCO Performance Center did not disappoint. It has a regulation size football field that was set up as the Family Fun Zone with many activities for kids of all ages to participate in while waiting for the practice gates to open. My grandchildren burned off quite a bit of energy with all the activities.

Once the practice gates opened, we ate lunch and watched the team practice on the Practice Fields. It was an amazing experience that I hope to have again soon. As we were leaving,

my grandson turned to me and said, "Grandma, this was the best day ever!" My heart was full.

We stayed at the hotel attached to the Mall of America as there was a swimming pool and instant access to shopping and the Nickelodeon Universe Amusement Park. The day after training camp, we spent the day at the amusement park. I am not a fan of rides due to old bones and motion sickness, however, I enjoyed every minute watching my grandkids and son. There was one rollercoaster they must have ridden at least 10 times. My granddaughter has less fear than my grandson, so she rode some of the more daring rides with my son.

A trip to the Mall of America is not complete without eating at the Rainforest Café and purchasing Minnesota Viking's bears at Build-a-Bear. On our way back home, we made a stop at Minnesota's largest candy store in Jordan, Minnesota. There was delicious homemade fudge and pies and candy from the US and other countries around the world. They also had 8-10 foot figurines of Marvel Avenger characters, which my grandchildren insisted on having their picture taken standing next to them. We left the store with a lot of candy and two happy kids.

On our way home, my grandson was already making plans for the next year's trip to Minnesota Vikings' training camp. While we don't go every year, I am looking forward to the next one!