



First RV Trip - Fall 2018



Day 8

Monday

October 1st

Jasper, TN

To

Oak Mountain

State Park

Campground

Alabama

Weather

80's

Sunny

More humid today

Hello to Family

I did start out early this morning, mostly because I did not realize I was now back on Central time. Ho hum. Who cares what time it is anyways.

My first stop was Russell Cave National Monument. As I was driving there I made a mental note to myself to tell you guys that this cave is going to be vastly different from the Ruby Falls Cave. Russell Cave is an archaeological/historical site, not built for entertainment.

Russell cave was inhabited from 10,000 BC to 1650 AD. Not always continuously, but sometimes on a seasonal basis. Once digging started they removed over 3 tons of artifacts. Carbon dating had just been discovered in the 1950's and it was used to determine the dates above.





This sinkhole was pretty cool when standing there and looking at it in 3D. But the 2D camera does not do it justice. This was just off the boardwalk on the way to the cave entrance.



First view of the cave



This is the entire entrance to the cave. The lower left portion goes back 2 miles and floods very easily, so the inhabitants occupied the upper cave to the right.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Russell Cave National Monument



Opening carved by water



Flooding is common here



Area can flood and drain in hours

Russell Cave is constantly changing. The water flowing through the cave has carved the openings that you see here, as well as the several miles of passageways that make up the cavern system. 14,000 acres of land drains into Russell Cave. Flooding is common here, as a few inches of rain can make for several feet of water. Russell Cave can flood in a matter of hours and drain just as fast.

As the water moves through the area and here to the cave opening, it picks up a lot of things along the way. Debris is deposited throughout the cave as is trash that is picked up by the water and deposited in the cave and surrounding area.

The trash along the roadside and elsewhere, never really disappears, it just gets relocated.

Help Keep America Clean, Please Don't Litter.

Experience Your America™

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American People so all may experience our heritage.



Debris deposited in the cave



Trash deposited in the cave



Combination of trash and debris



Just a little different from Ruby Falls right? But it was very interesting.

When I was looking at the displays in the visitor center I heard one of the rangers, there were three women rangers on site, talking on the phone about a book she had written being looked at by an editor. I was curious as to the type of book it would be. But I went on down the boardwalk and checked out the cave. I was just leaning against the railing enjoying the sound of the running water when one of the Rangers sauntered up. We stood there talking for probably a good 10 minutes, then started back to the visitor center. During the walk I asked her if she was the ranger I overheard talking about a book. She was. We talked about that for awhile. Then I told her about the fantasy adventure trilogy I wrote an outline for back in the 90's, and still have all the notes for. Then, you probably guessed already, she asked me if I would like to have dinner if I was ever in Chattanooga.

I was not shocked at all. I am used to women throwing themselves at me. LOL JK JK.

She was kind of embarrassed, said she has been divorced about 6 years and doesn't really date. She just thought it would be fun to have dinner with an adult who shares her passion for writing and books in general.

So I took her email address.

I think the picture below is about where I was standing and listening to the water.



From Russell Cave I drove down to Anniston, Alabama, site of the Freedom Riders protest.

It was interesting and I took photos of all the plaques (except the back side of this one I just realized). If you want or have time, it is an interesting story and was worth the drive to see it.



The sign in the bus station window



The Freedom Rides

The Rides began in May 1961 when the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) decided to test a 1960 U. S. Supreme Court ruling that outlawed segregation in depot restaurants and restrooms serving interstate passengers.

Previously, CORE had organized a bus trip in 1947 called the "Journey of Reconciliation" to test a 1946 decision by the high court that ruled segregated seating was unconstitutional. During the 1947 trip, an interracial group of 16 men and women spent two weeks traveling by bus through four states in the Upper South. Jim Peck, a white participant, received the only beating of the trip but eight of the riders served jail time with several forced to work on a chain gang for breaking state segregation laws.

No other tests followed until James Farmer, the CORE director and a participant in the 1947 ride, called for a test of Southern compliance with the 1960 ruling. "Our intention," Farmer said, "was to provoke the southern authorities into arresting us and thereby prod the Justice Department into enforcing the law of the land."

The new test became a "Freedom Ride" because in Farmer's estimation, it required a name that expressed the organization's determination to put "the movement on wheels...to cut across state lines and establish the position that we were entitled to act any place in the country, no matter where we hung our hat and called home, because it was our country."

In early April 1961, the planners developed the route and lined up sponsors in communities along the way. Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana were now included in order to test Deep South compliance



Who were the Riders?

In Atlanta, the Riders separated into two integrated groups to board two different buses; the seven who were on the Greyhound bus destined for Anniston included:

- Albert Bigelow, 55, white male from Connecticut (a retired naval officer, architect, housing administrator, and peace activist)
- Ed Blankenheim, 27, white male from Arizona (a carpenter and student at the University of Arizona)
- Genevieve Hughes, 28, white female, who lived in Washington, D.C. (CORE field secretary)
- Jimmy McDonald, 29, black male from New York City, (folk singer and CORE activist)
- Mae Frances Moultrie, 24, black female from Sumter, S.C. (student at Morris College)
- Joseph Perkins, 27, black male from Owensboro, Ky. (CORE field secretary)
- Hank Thomas, 19, black male from Elton, Fla. (student at Howard University)

Also on the Greyhound were five regular passengers and two journalists, Charlotte Devree and Moses Newson. Unbeknownst to the Riders, the Greyhound regional manager Roy Robinson, and two undercover plainclothes agents of the Alabama Highway Patrol, Corporals Eli Cowling and Harry Sims also boarded. Seven other Riders boarded a Trailways bus, which was scheduled to arrive in Anniston an hour later than the Greyhound (See Trail site # 2).

The CORE plan had been to arrive in New Orleans, La. on May 17, the seventh anniversary of the Brown decision, outlawing segregated schools. On the morning of May 4, fourteen ordinary citizens boarded two buses for a journey in search of simple justice. Their well-planned journey would end abruptly in Anniston on Mother's Day, May 14, 1961.



The Selection Process

CORE leadership solicited applicants for the Ride from outside the organization as well as CORE veterans. They tried to achieve a reasonably balanced mixture of black and white, young and old, religious and secular. The only deliberate imbalance was along gender lines; there were only two women on the first Ride.

Each applicant was asked for a recommendation from a teacher, pastor, or co-worker and to write an essay outlining his or her commitment to nonviolence and the struggle for civil rights. Volunteers under the age of twenty-one also had to submit proof of parental permission.

Thirteen Freedom Riders, representing an experienced and committed band of activists, met in Washington on May 1 for three days of intensive preparation and training in nonviolence. They were briefed on constitutional law, arrest procedures, and the white South. Their training also included "intense role-playing sessions" in which they experienced the full range of aggressive actions. They were knocked to the floor, had coffee poured on them, shoved, spit on, and called racial epithets. By May 3, all of the Riders were emotionally drained but bonded as family.

On May 4, 1961, the Riders received last-minute instructions on seating arrangements since a careful seating plan was necessary for a proper test of the law. One black Rider was to sit in a seat ordinarily reserved for white passengers; an interracial pair of Riders was to sit in adjoining seats, and the rest scattered throughout the bus. The Riders adhered to a strict dress code – coats and ties for men, dresses and high heels for women. All the Riders were asked to represent the cause of social justice openly and honestly without resorting to needless provocative or confrontational behavior.

The Segregationists

The Alabama Knights of the Ku Klux Klan had known about the Freedom Ride since mid-April and had detailed information on the city-by-city itinerary, thanks to FBI memos forwarded to the Birmingham Police Department. In a series of secret meetings in April and mid-May, the Klansmen prepared a "welcome" for the Riders. Conspiring with Birmingham's ultra-segregationist commissioner of public safety, Eugene "Bull" Connor, the Klan was assured by Birmingham police sergeant Tom Cook, they would have 15 minutes in which they could "beat 'em, bomb 'em, maim, or kill 'em...assure every Klansman in the country that no one will be arrested in Alabama for that 15 minutes." Meanwhile, informants had shared all this information with the FBI, which simply watched and waited for fear of revealing the identity of their informants.

During a meeting of the Alabama Klan's board of directors in Tuscaloosa on May 13, the plot to attack the "outside agitators" from CORE was ratified. The plan called for an initial assault in Anniston, the Riders' first scheduled stop in Alabama, followed by a mop-up action in Birmingham.

The Anniston klavern, led by Kenneth Adams, did not belong to the Alabama Knights KKK confederation but they were more than happy to help out with the welcoming party. Adams was a notorious racist, who had beaten black singer Nat King Cole during a performance in Birmingham in 1956. None of the conspirators in Birmingham trusted Adams' planning skills so Connor sent Cook to Anniston on May 12 to ensure everything was in order. From there, Cook went on to Atlanta to survey the bus stations where the unsuspecting Freedom Riders were scheduled to depart on May 14.



Prelude 12 p.m. - 12:54 p.m.

Just before this picture of the Greyhound Bus Depot at 1031 Gurnee (below left) was taken, approximately 75 men had gathered in front of it. They quickly dispersed as free-lance photographer for The Anniston Star, Joe Postiglione aimed his camera.

The depot manager had called the Anniston police chief throughout the morning to tell him the crowd was "growing uglier by the minute," and asked for officers to be dispatched. When they didn't come, he ordered the terminal shut down around 12:10 p.m. and put a "closed" sign on the door. Later he and his son (pictured by the sign) returned as spectators.



Arrival 12:54 p.m.

The bus neared the Greyhound station just before one o'clock, traveling north on Gurnee where it turned right at 11th and entered the station from the alley behind. Note the cars lining the street. Any other Sunday afternoon, the street would be deserted.

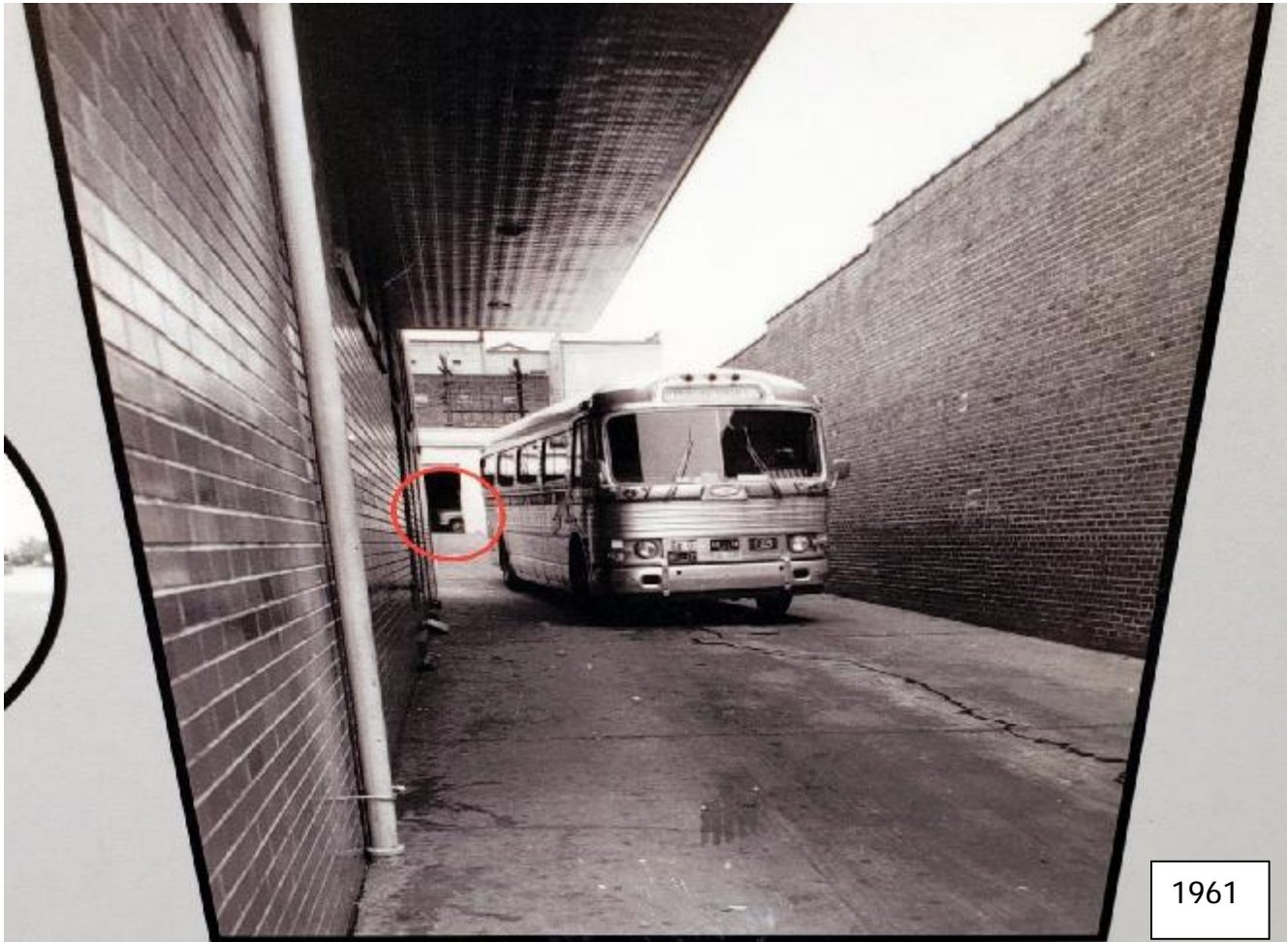
The driver and passengers had been warned earlier by a southbound bus driver outside the city that the station was closed and that an angry crowd had gathered. FBI files note that the car seen at the back of the photo was rumored to be filled with "500 pieces of ammunition." Freedom Rider Hank Thomas remembers the strange feeling he experienced as the bus pulled in. "It was very quiet...for a moment."



1961

2018





1961

2018



The Ambush 12:54 p.m. - 1:10 p.m.

The silence didn't last long. Anniston Klansman William Chappell and a screaming mob of about 50 white men surrounded the bus. An 18-year-old Klansman Roger Couch lay on the pavement in front of the bus to block any attempt to leave. Couch later told the FBI he suffered "an epileptic fit." The mob, carrying metal pipes, clubs, and chains milled around menacingly, some screaming "Dirty Communists" and "Seig Heil!"



A bus that left one evening the town to return to Birmingham, Ala., and arrived at 12:54 p.m. at a station in Anniston. It was surrounded by a mob of Klansmen and other whites. They forced the bus to stop on the street in front of the store. Several men lay on the pavement in front of the bus. The mob milled around the bus. The mob milled around the bus.

The Police 1:10 p.m. - 1:25 p.m.

Anniston police arrived on the scene around 1:15 p.m. even though they were only a block away at 1200 Gurnee, and had been alerted throughout the morning that there might be trouble. They examined the damage but made no attempt to arrest anyone. Then without warning, officers cleared a path and motioned for the bus to exit.



Pursuit 1:25 p.m. - 1:35 p.m.

Heading to Birmingham, the battered bus turned south on Gurnee from the station and west on 10th St. while men rushed to their cars to follow. Police escorted the bus to the city limits where they turned back, leaving the bus and its passengers to their fate.

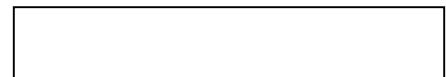
A long line of cars and pick-up trucks had followed the police escort, waiting for their chance. As the bus traveled out Hwy. 202, two of the cars raced around the front of the bus and slowed to a crawl, forcing the bus driver to slow as well. The two slashed tires slowly deflated, and the driver had to pull over at Forsyth & Sons Grocery, six miles outside Anniston.



Bus (circled in red) at Gurnee & 10th St.



ANNISTON Star photographer Joe Posthorne snapped this photo of the bus (circled in red) and its pursuers.



Trapped *1:35 p.m. - 1:55 p.m.*

After examining the tires, the driver made a futile effort to call around to find replacements (note smashed window above his head).



Freedom Riders Ed Blankenheim (left) and Joe Perkins followed their training, not making eye contact or deliberately provoking confrontation. Highway patrol agent Cowling is seen exiting, with just enough time to retrieve his revolver from the baggage compartment before the mob surrounded the bus. Windows were smashed and the bus rocked in an attempt to turn it over. For twenty minutes, the angry mob pounded on the bus, demanding that the Freedom Riders come out to take what was coming to them.

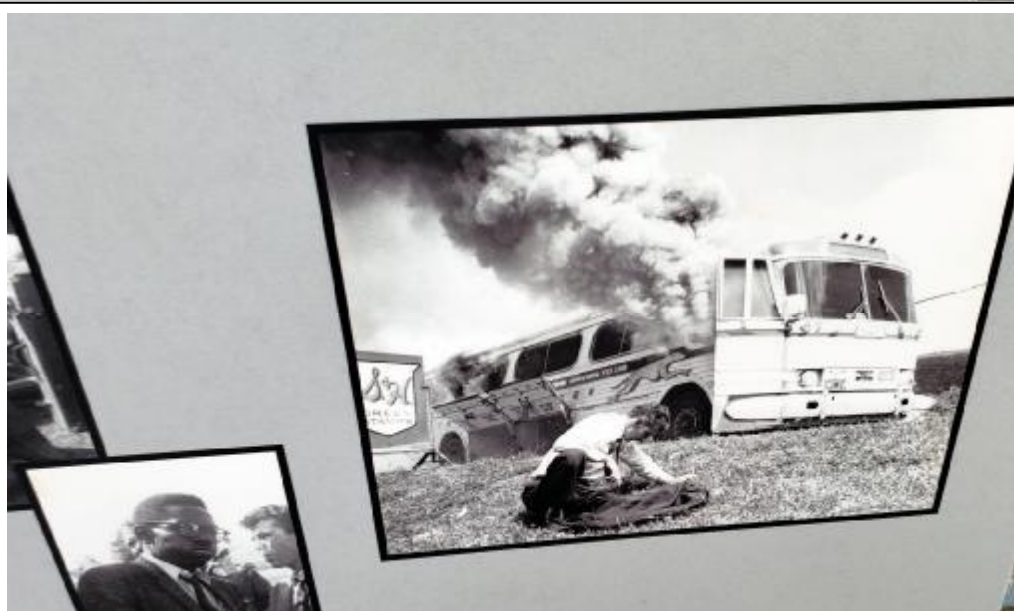
Horror and Disbelief *1:55 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.*

The violence reached a crescendo when a flaming bundle of rags was thrown into one of the broken windows. Within seconds, the bundle exploded, sending dark gray smoke throughout the bus.

Three of the Riders found open windows, dropping to the ground and staggering across the street, where neighbors took the two white women to the hospital. The others were trapped inside as some of the mob pressed against the door screaming "burn them alive." It was only an exploding fuel tank that forced the mob's retreat.

Agent Cowling then pried open the door and the choking passengers escaped. Hank Thomas, the first Rider to exit, was struck in the head with a baseball bat. He fell to the ground as the rest of the Riders spilled out.

A few of the neighbors stepped forward to offer assistance, including 12-year-old Janie Forsyth, who lived with her family next door to their store. She supplied the victims with water, filling and refilling a five-gallon bucket.



The Burning Bus

While the Riders awaited rescue, the bus continued to burn. The Anniston Fire Department extinguished the flames and administered oxygen. A state trooper called an ambulance, but it took Cowling to force the driver to carry the injured black Riders as well as the white to Anniston Memorial Hospital.



The Greyhound bus, itself, was towed to Birmingham for evidence collection. Thus far, no one knows what happened to it after that; replicas are all that exist.

Rescue

Once there, all of the injured were treated at the urging of an FBI agent on the scene. In the meantime, the crowd outside the hospital grew larger and more menacing, with some Klansmen threatening to burn the building to the ground. At that, the superintendent ordered the Riders to leave as soon as possible but there was no one, local police or state troopers, willing to provide transportation. Joe Perkins put in a frantic call to Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth in Birmingham, who recruited deacons to drive eight cars over to Anniston. With the police holding back a jeering crowd outside the hospital, and the deacons openly displaying weapons, the Riders piled into the cars. As evening fell, the convoy sped back to Birmingham with the stunned Riders wondering what had happened to their friends on the Trailways bus. (See Site #2)



Anniston Memorial Hospital

Escape

Following the two attacks in Anniston (Greyhound and Trailways), the Freedom Riders on each bus were reunited Sunday evening at Rev. Shuttlesworth's Bethel Baptist Church parsonage. They slept there or at the homes of volunteers. When Monday dawned, the Riders voted to complete the Ride and went to the bus station, only to encounter bus drivers who refused to drive them. Following phone calls all day between Shuttlesworth, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, and Gov. John Patterson's office, it became clear the Ride could not safely continue because no law enforcement in the state would provide safe passage.

The Riders then were forced to leave by air that evening. When they arrived at the airport, they found a mob outside and taunts from police and passengers inside; airport staff refused them food. After several bomb threats delayed their departure, Robert Kennedy's special representative John Siegenthaler arrived from Washington and took control of the situation. The plane carrying the Riders finally lifted off the runway at 10:38 p.m. and landed in New Orleans an hour later. The Ride appeared to be over.



Triumph

But the Ride didn't end. The national newspaper and television coverage of what had happened galvanized the Nashville Student Movement, which already had experience successfully challenging segregationist practices through lunch counter sit-ins, stand-ins, and other acts of nonviolent resistance.

Eight black and two white college students, none over 23, volunteered to continue the Ride immediately on May 17. Their actions and the brutal response they endured ultimately inspired other Americans — 436 in all — to become Freedom Riders throughout the summer of 1961. They were college and high school students, ministers, rabbis, professors, artists, secretaries, nurses, longshoremen, and day laborers — black and white, male and female, young and old. While subsequent Riders experienced more violence and 300 were jailed in the notorious Parchman Prison in Mississippi, the Rides succeeded in ways, both practical and inspirational, that no one could have predicted.

Historian Ray Arsenault writes: "Within six months of the first Ride, travelers of all races were sitting side by side on buses and trains all across the nation without fear of arrest, the WHITE and COLORED signs that had blighted the walls of Southern bus and train stations for decades were gone...The most important and lasting consequence — the one that confirmed the Rides' status as a pivotal moment in American history — was a revolutionary change in the character of citizen politics...they, more than any other activists of their day, foreshadowed the grassroots "rights revolution" that would transform American citizenship over the next four decades."

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead, author and anthropologist



Following a mistrial, five of the six men indicted for the bus burning pled guilty and were sentenced to one-year probation terms by Federal District Court Judge Hobart Grooms. He allowed a sixth to serve time concurrent with a sentence for burglary.

The Photograph

The most famous photograph of the Freedom Rides and one of the most iconic of the Civil Rights movement was taken by a freelance photographer for The Anniston Star, Joe Postiglione, called "Little Joe" by his friends, was tipped off by the Greyhound bus station manager on the evening of May 13, 1961 that something was brewing for the next day.

He arrived at the bus station early the next morning before 8 o'clock and waited around. When he was asked by a local Klansman why he had a camera, he quickly improvised: "Hell, don't ask me. Ask Ken. You all sent for me." Referring to Ken Adams, the local Klan leader, ensured Postiglione was left alone, but he remained cautious as he clicked away.

His photos of the bus burning run in the Star the next day and afterward were purchased by other news organizations, ultimately provoking national and international outrage. Without the widespread press coverage Postiglione's photographs helped ignite, historian Ray Arsenault says the moral drama of the 1961 Freedom Rides might never have reached the broad audience necessary to force change.

Two days later on May 16, "Little Joe" was interviewed by the FBI, identifying people and the sequence of events. When he and his family became the targets of death threats and vandalism to their cars, the FBI provided 24-hour protection, walking his younger children to school. The whole family was ostracized and he was hung in effigy at a Klan rally on Quintard Ave. Ultimately, the family left the area — never to return.

Postiglione died in Kentucky in 1995. The photos disappeared from the Star's records, and no one knows what happened to the negatives. A set of the photos came to light in 2005 when a local law firm that had defended the attackers found them in files they were sorting for destruction. The firm, Merrill, Merrill, Mathews & Allen donated their copies to the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute.



The Photographer
Joe Postiglione

50 Years Later

On May 11, 2011, 40 students who were retracing the route of the original Freedom Ride, arrived in Anniston. The student Freedom Ride was part of a promotion organized by WGBH/Boston, a member of the Public Broadcasting system. The goal was to publicize the documentary Freedom Riders, which aired May 16, 2011 on American Experience. During a program at the library to open an exhibit of bus burning photos, original Freedom Rider Hank Thomas and the son of one of the original attackers, Richard Couch, met and embraced. Richard apologized for his father's acts of violence. The program ended with a roomful of people, black, white, Hispanic, Asian and Native American singing "We Shall Overcome."



A student from California, Francisco Diaz, wrote in his blog later: *Anniston, Alabama. The name has developed a strong notoriety in my consciousness. It conjures up images of angry mobs and violent intolerance. It was the first escalation and first stark expression of raw hatred against the original Freedom Riders, the place that produced the image of a burning Greyhound that has been ubiquitous thru-out our journey. Before this trip I would say to my friends, "I wouldn't be caught dead in the South." What I had heard of the region conjured up a view of angry, hostile racists lurking around every corner, every southern corner concealing contempt for those they deemed different from them. It's no surprise, I reasoned, that the current swath of anti-immigrant legislation states are trying to enact across the country are strongest in these former Confederate states. While I am the first to reiterate that there is still much work to be done, I am now happy to say that my own views were flawed, prejudicial, and incomplete. I say that I'm happy because I have now begun to move past that view. At dinner I sat next to an Anniston local named Richard Couch. I couldn't help but think that he was the stereotype of the South that I had developed in my mind, a burly, blue-eyed man with a thick southern drawl, whose father had been a Klansman, one of the mob that had been there on that day of terror in 1961.*

Richard was also one of the funniest and most sincere men I have met, a public defender who advocates for the poor of Anniston, who was genuinely happy to meet me and an Oakland Raider fan and general lover of the San Francisco Bay Area to boot. When Richard Couch gave an impromptu and fearful welcome to Hank Thomas, who had been on that bus the day it was burned and when they embraced, I viewed the full power of nonviolence. The son of a Klansman hugging a man who his father hated and wanted dead was a greater victory than any violent counter-attack that could have done at the time to the mob that surrounded that. If the Freedom Riders had not been nonviolent, they fought back and perhaps killed Richard Couch. This true moment would not have occurred. The genuine power of the moment we saw was brief, luminous glimpse of the beloved comrade Mr. Thomas and the other Freedom Riders in. Where I once saw hate, bigotry and violence, see love, understanding and hope. Later on, my fellow student riders told me that the comment page in the local newspaper's website was full of comments about "stirring the race pot" and "unnecessarily bringing up old wounds." They have discouraged me, because we have not completely overcome, but I saw the true power of love, and as we continue, no amount of hat continued ignorance will take that away.

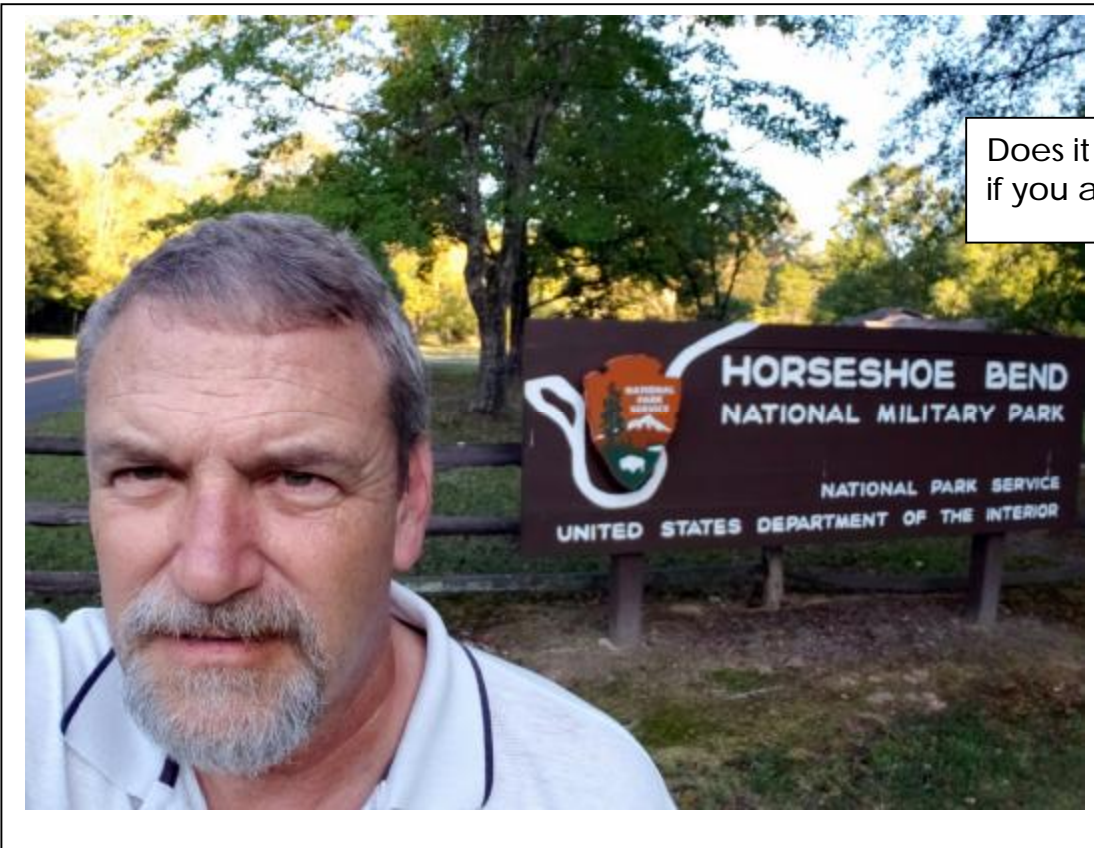


Lighting the Way

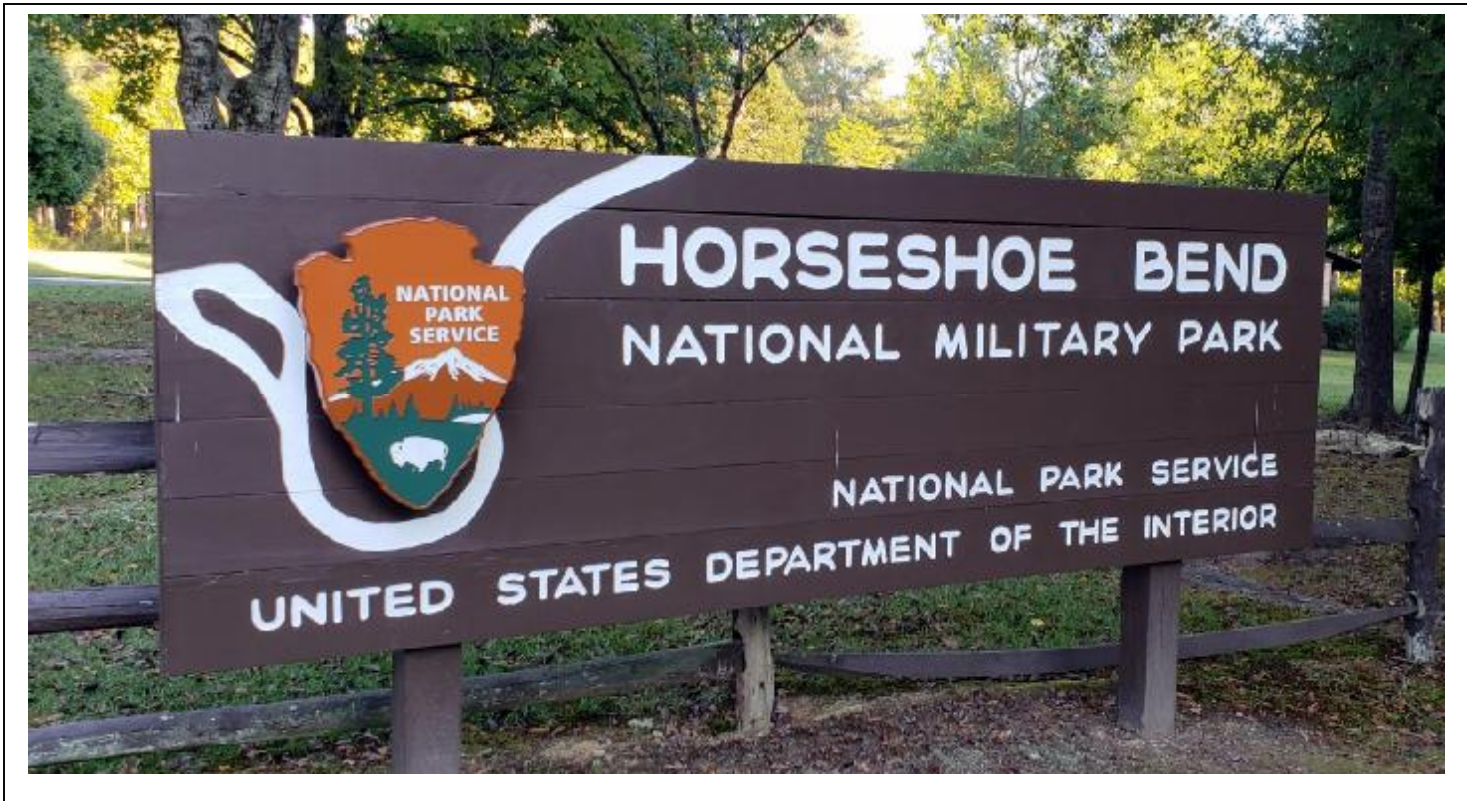
Honoring the Episcopal Exiles, persecuted victims
who made their history on July 14, 1861
and
the City of Ansonia
for embracing the past to look to the future.

Dedicated August 21, 2019

ALAGASCO



Does it count as an official visit if you arrive after hours?





I was looking forward to this site more than Chickamauga since it involved the 1812 Indian Wars instead of the Civil War. But alas, maybe next time....after dinner. Wink Wink



It was a great 2.5 hr drive from Russell Cave to Anniston. Just perfect for the Brewer Game. SiriusXM came with the RV, 3 months worth, almost free. Still \$15 just to activate. So I listen to the Brewers, Badgers and Packers when they are on.

Speaking of the radio. When I was in North Carolina and The Great Smokeys I listened to Bluegrass. Once I passed into Tennessee I turned on the Elvis channel.

On to Vicksburg tomorrow.