



The Reel west newsletter

Day 3
 Sunday
 April 3rd
 Staunton, IL
 To
 Lebanon, Missouri

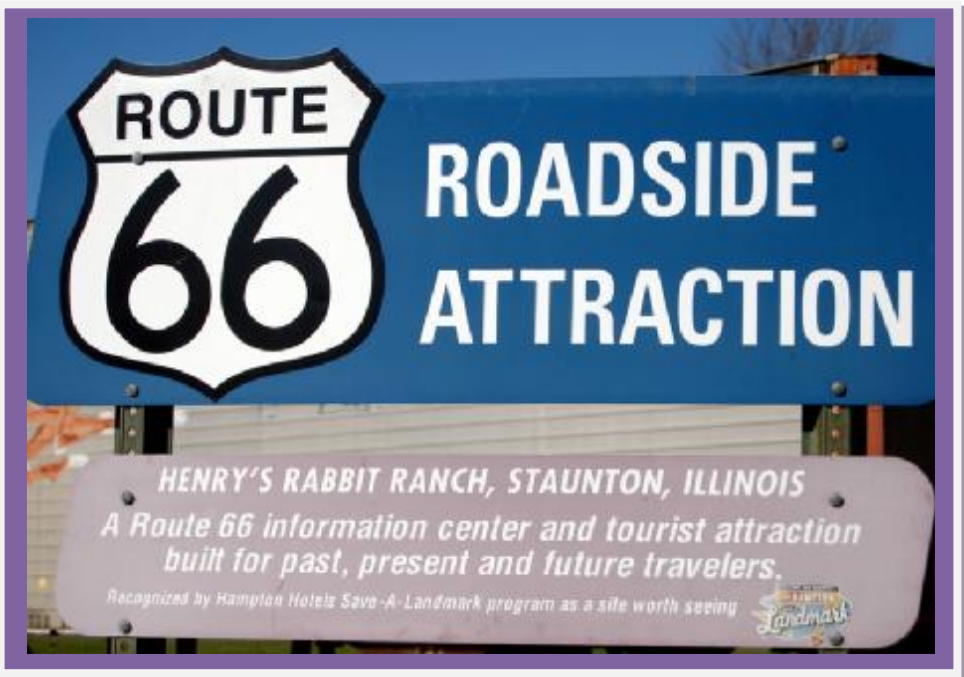
Stats
 475 miles
 475 total miles this trip
 Just over 9 hours on the road

Weather
 High Temp: 78
 Low Temp: TBD
 Conditions: Fantastic



A

After leaving my motel, and still in Staunton, I stopped to visit Henry's Rabbit Ranch. A collection of Route 66 memorabilia.



All that is left of the Bel Air Drive-In Theater near Mitchell, IL



I remember these trucks from my youth. The camel is named Snortin' Norton.

An old gas station; vintage neon signs; and all things pertaining to Rabbits.

Those are VW Rabbits buried in the ground. A harbinger of things to come once we get to Texas.

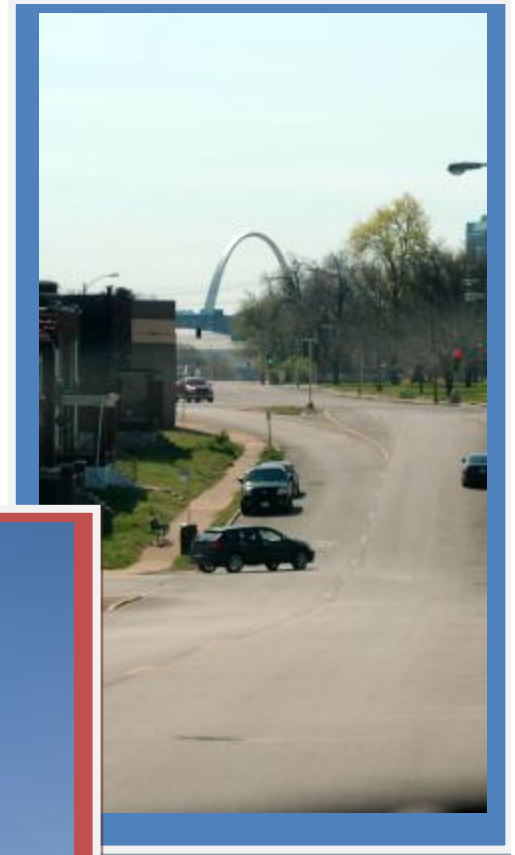


The Chain of Rocks Bridge, built in 1929 as a toll bridge, the toll in 1946 was 25 cents. This is a 5,323 foot, through truss bridge over the Mississippi River, with a 22 degree bend in the middle to allow for uninterrupted river traffic. Closed in 1967, it was then renovated for pedestrian and bicycle traffic only. I decided it was not worth the 45 minute walk, time I could use to play catch-up.

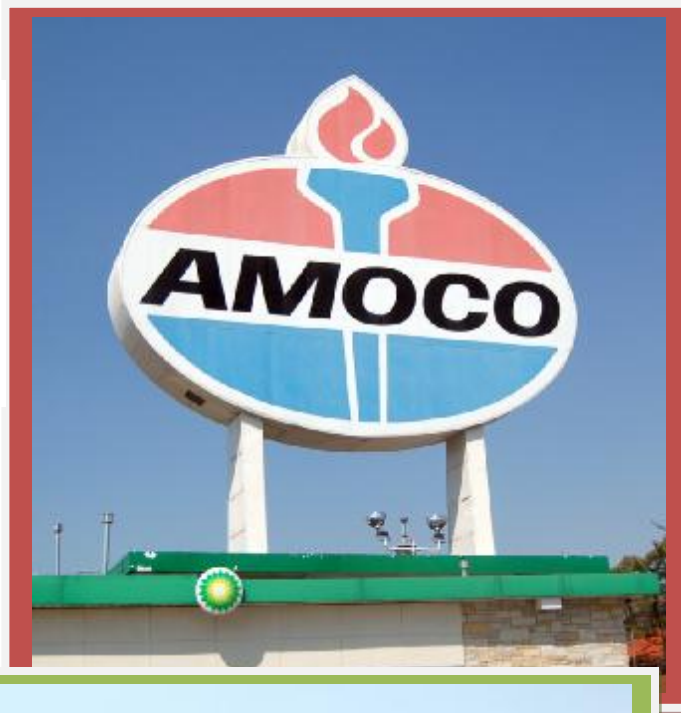
This is the new Route 66 sign I will be following in Missouri.



This is as close to the Arch, and downtown St. Louis that I will get on this trip. Not only have I been here before and seen most of the sites (ok, it was 20 years ago), I found out the Cardinals have opening day today. It will be a madhouse down there.



GIANT ALERT - Dogtown, MO. (Really? Well, I guess Milwaukee has Pigsville) and a giant AMOCO sign. That sign is probably 30 feet across.



In Pond I found The Big Chief Roadhouse. Built in 1929, the roadhouse took over the Big Chief Hotel and its 62 cabin with attached garages.

Not too long past Pond I missed a turn, which then became the adventure of the day. The road I was on started out reminding me of driving through the Kettle Moraine area in Wisconsin. For those of you not from Wisconsin, this is small valleys and hills left by glaciers through which a narrow road twists and turns. Fun to drive. A few miles later, as the valleys became deeper and the hills higher, I was reminded of driving through the Great Smokies. It was a fun drive, and since I was enjoying it, I decided to keep going rather than turn around. I would get back to '66 eventually. Soon there was a trio of crotch rockets behind me, just as the road ahead became closed due to construction. I made a u-turn and stopped to reprogram the GPS. The bikes stopped right behind me. After a moment or two I headed back the way I had come, which didn't feel right, busted another u-turn, made a left turn, and stopped near a couple, also on motorcycles. As I did some more satellite manipulation the couple took off. A minute later the three crotch rockets crossed in front of me following the couple. I fell in line behind them. I was able to keep the three bikes in sight, let's say 15 seconds behind, when I came around a corner and found them, all five bikes, stopped, riders bending over something on the side of the road. It turned out to be the guy from the couple. He had lost control and dumped the bike. He was shaken and the bike was in the muddy ditch. The other three bikers and myself uprighted the bike and hauled it to safe ground. The guy was up and moving, talking, and shook all our hands in thanks. I took off and stopped at the spot below to eat lunch, during which I watched the three bikers zoom past. Just as I was finishing I heard sirens and an EMS vehicle sped past, back towards the accident. I hope he didn't have a delayed reaction.



Another classic, unlit,
neon sign

Below is the actual motel

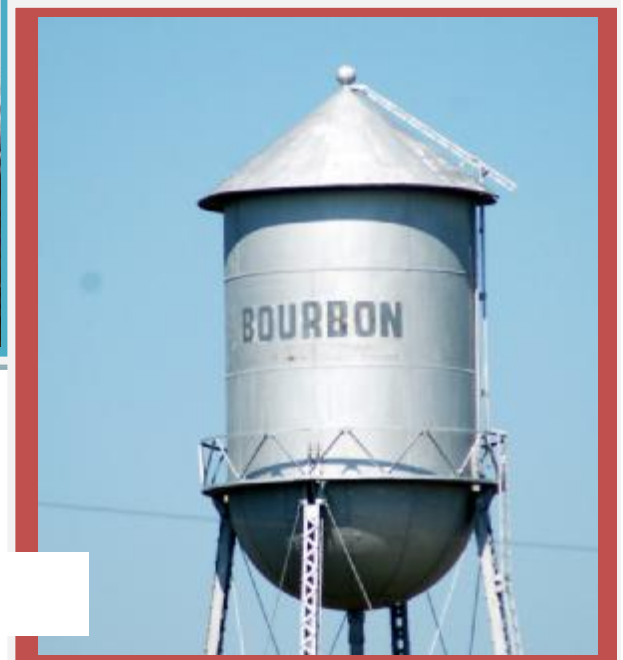




The abandoned building below used to be the Diamonds Restaurant

On to Stanton and the infamous Meramec Caverns. The Barn sign below is one of the best I have ever seen.

Since the caves are not directly on Route 66, I decided not to pay them a visit.



This one is for you Max!!

This one is city sized. The one above must be for personal use only.



Cuba boasts the Wagon Wheel Motel built in 1935 and refurbished in 2010. I could not believe this was a motel. Great looking place. Cuba is also proclaimed "Route 66 Mural City". A couple are included further below.





Amelia Earhart had a forced landing near Cuba prior to her around the world attempt.



The rock must be from a local quarry, many of the buildings in Cuba have variations.

GIANT ALERT – At the US 66 Outpost in Fanning is the World's Largest Rocking Chair. Hmmm, I wonder if there is a ball of yarn nearby.

Below is the Outpost and the mural on the side of the building.

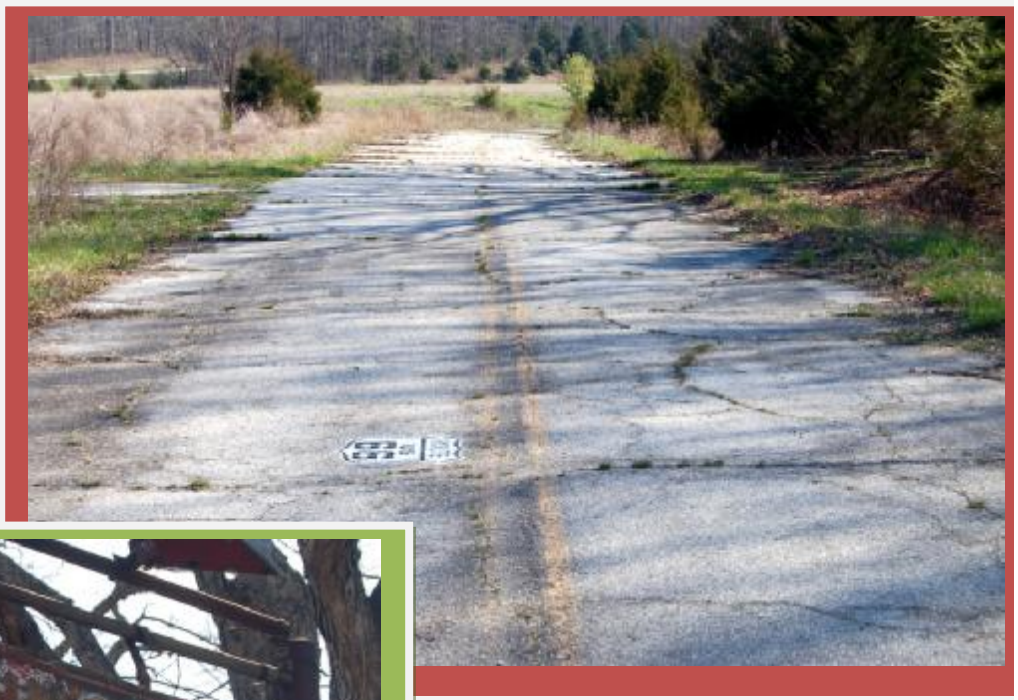


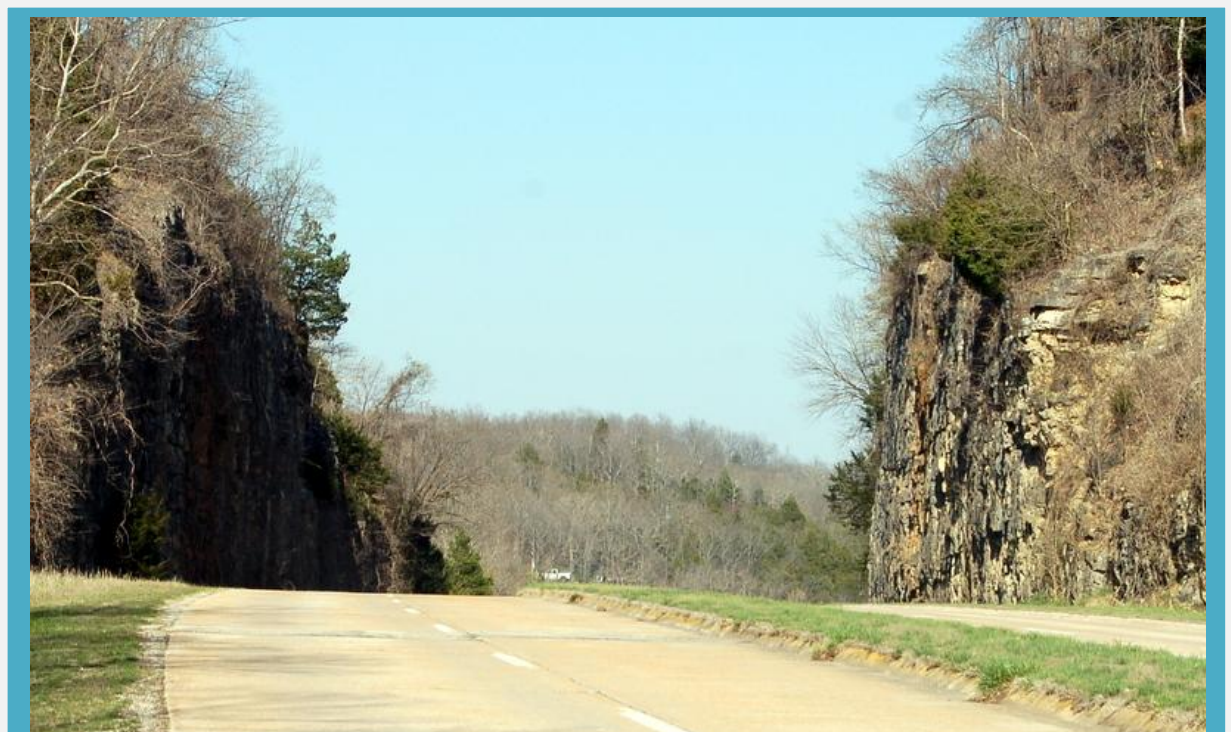
GIANT ALERT – Just outside of St. James, this is referred to as a Giant Dripping Neon Faucet. I bet it looks pretty cool at dusk.

Below is a model of England's Stonehenge, carved with high speed water jets by students from The University of Missouri at Rolla. I prefer the original.



South of Rolla, on an old abandoned stretch of '66, another victim of realignment can be found. John's Modern Cabins.





Above, near Hooker, is Hooker Cut. The cut is ninety feet deep, and at the time, 1943, was the largest highway rock cut in the U.S. It was done to create a 4 lane bypass of Devil's Elbow (below) due to the increase of traffic from nearby Fort Leonard Wood.

Devil's Elbow is named for the nearby bend in the Big Piney River that caused massive logjams. The steel truss bridge was constructed in 1923 and served until 1943.



SCAVENGER HUNT: What military vehicle honors Ft. Leonard Wood at the George M Reed Roadside Park?

The answer? A tank of course.

GIANT ALERT - A giant bowling pin, just south of Waynesville.



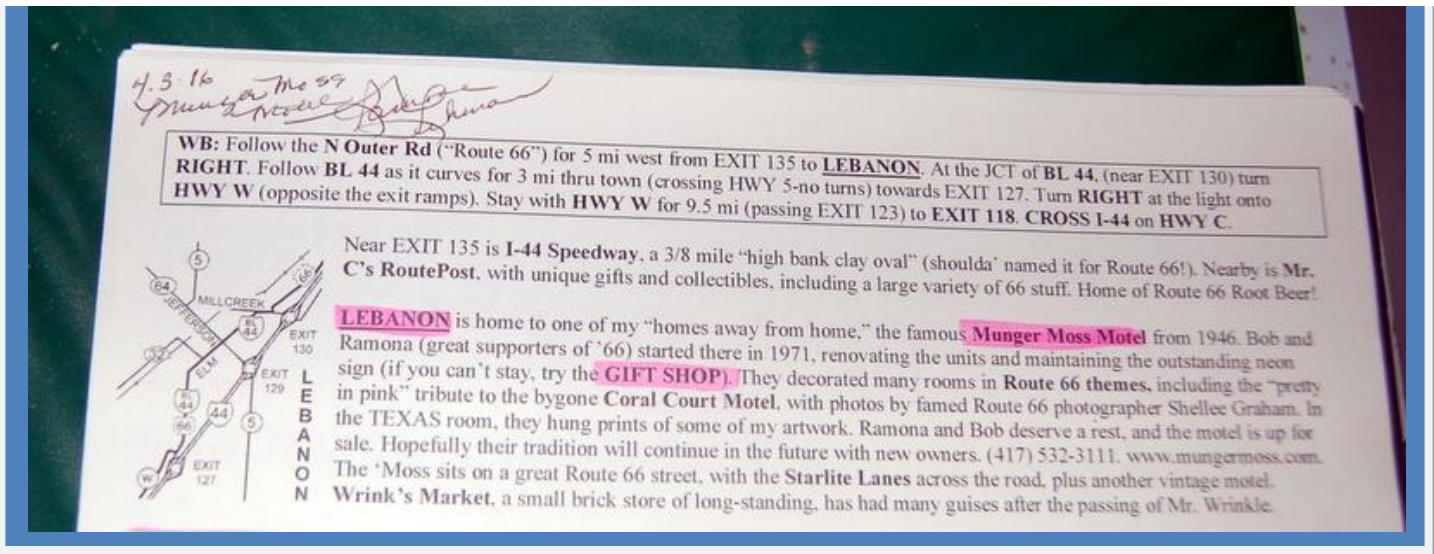


After much consideration, I decided to spend the night at the famous Munger Moss Motel in Lebanon. The business went through several ownerships from 1946 to 1971, when Bob and Ramona Lehman put their stamp on it.

It is a large complex. My room is in the long center building, last room on the right.

Many of the rooms have a theme to them, mine is the Oklahoma room. Its decorated with several of Jerry McClanahan's prints. (Author of my EZ Guide and renowned artist)





Ramona even autographed my EZ Guide.

I was looking around the gift shop/office of the motel waiting for Ramona to finish taking care of a couple young ladies from Spain who are traveling Route 66 west (maybe I will run into them again). While they went to look at the '66 room, another couple young ladies came in the door. They were also from Spain, were traveling Route 66, and did not know the other two. I turned to Ramona and said "that has to be a little unusual" and she agreed.

Later in the evening I met a couple guys, cousins from Maryland and Pennsylvania that had just checked in. We were all taking photos of the neon sign. I went in the office to talk to Ramona and met another Wisconsinite. Walt from 100th and Capital. He is a retired engineer who worked several years for Allis Chalmers

I will give everyone a break tomorrow and not take as many photos. Since I am near Branson I am going to stop and visit a retired golfing buddy of mine, Jim Heili, and hopefully play a little golf. We will see how far I get by tomorrow night.

I will leave you with the FANTASTIC photo I took of the Hotel's neon sign.

Hope you enjoy,

Mark



Munger Moss

MOTEL

TELEPHONES
REFRIGERATED

VACANCY

FREE
TV