

rammalamma in alabama

Fock 1: Freakin' A

Let's talk about the letter A for a bit. This would seem to be an appropriate time to do that since Alabama not only begins with an A, and it not only ends with an A, but it also has two A's contained within. Every freaking other freaking letter is a freaking A. Four out of seven letters are A. That's 57.1% A's! No other state name is so dominated by any letter. Not the O's in Ohio (50%), nor the A's in Alaska (50%), nor the E's in Tennessee (44%), nor the O's in Colorado (37.5%), nor the I's in Illinois (37.5%), nor the S's or I's in Mississippi (both 36.4%), nor the ... well, you get the picture. It's A's on holiday in Alabama!

Four states begin with A. RR2K would be going through three of them.

Nineteen states end in A, including three of the four that begin with A. Fourteen do not contain A at all. Fuckin' A.

A is OK. In fact, the space program once made A-OK a common phrase. The A has seemed to drop in recent decades though. A should not feel bad about that; the O seems to be on the way out too, K?

A is Excellent. Just ask any report card; it'll tell ya that. Then the letters get crappier and crappier. B is only Good. C is just Fair. D is Poor. "Poor", that always cracked me up; it should have stood for "Dumbass".

No school I ever was associated with dealt with E as a grade, though I don't know why. They skipped E and pounced on F – the big bad F – ostensibly because it stood for Fail. Well, if it was initials they were after, they kinda missed the boat with A, B, C, and D, doncha think? Wouldn't E, G, F, and P have represented those grades better? Then you could use L for Loser if you got a failing grade.

Also, thanks to the turdfaces who dwell so much on political correctness and all that self-esteem bullshit, we are now seeing categories that should be A, B, C, D, E, instead being listed as A, AA, AAA, AAAA, AAAAA, which, of course get shortened to 1A, 2A, 3A, 4A, and 5A. How monumentally stupid is that? If they are **all** a number plus an A, we don't really need the **A** at all, do we?? **Just use the damn number!!** Grrrrrr.

Several states actually assign their high schools into classifications using that multi-A indexing. What's the freaking point? Would Class C schools feel as if they were only Fair, and Class D schools hang their collective heads over being deemed Poor? Do Florida's Class AAA (3A) schools have more self-esteem because they have three A's and are, hence, Triple Excellent?? Is 4A, then, god-like?

The NCAA has Divisions I, II, and III. Note the Roman numerals instead of common numbers. How pretentious! Beware of those using Roman Numerals; look what happened to Julius Caesar! The NCAA also has Division I-AA. They do have a Division I-A, but they never call it that; they just call it Division I. So, why not keep Division I as "Division I", and change Division I-AA to "Division I-A"? Wouldn't that make more sense? Or have "Division I-A," and "Division I-B." Pardon me if I'm being logical here. And Division I-AA is often pronounced "Division One-Two-A". What kind of twaddle is that? Wouldn't that be "12A" (Twelve A)?

But, on another A-vein, is there any more idiotic word in the English slanguage than "A-hole"? Give me a break. Is that supposed to be the polite and acceptable variation of "asshole"? Just why is "A-hole" tolerated where "asshole" is not? Is this supposed to mask exactly which body part is being alluded to? Is "ass" the offensive part? Could "a-hole" mean "airhole"? If somebody calls you an "a-hole," why are you less insulted than if they fire the uncensored verbal volley at you? By softening the vulgarity, one softens the intent, even though the orifice remains the same. Being called an "anus" would just make me snicker.

So. Alabama. Yeahhh, good ol' 'Bama. The Yellowhammer State.

The yellowhammer is a bird -- a woodpecker to be more precise, and the "common flicker" to be even more ornithologically correct. Word in the street is that the yellowhammer eats more ants than any other American bird. For that reason alone, it gets a thumbs-up from me: ants suck. The yellowhammer also eats poison ivy berries. Top ho! Another fine trait! Eat 'em up, you flickers!

The Yellowhammer State nickname comes from Civil War times. It was first applied to fresh Confederate soldiers who arrived at the front lines wearing spanking new uniforms, complete with ornate bits of brilliant yellow cloth on the sleeves, coattails, and collars. Some wiseass veteran in a battle-tattered uniform ragged on them by calling them yellowhammers. The new company almost immediately was dubbed the "Yellowhammer Company." The term not only stuck, it quickly spread throughout the Confederate Army and soon all Alabama troops were referred to unofficially as the "Yellowhammers."

When the Confederate Veterans in Alabama were organized, they took pride in being referred to as the "Yellowhammers" and wore a yellowhammer feather in their caps or lapels during reunions.

Now, is that bassackwards or what? Some guy tries to taunt the rookies, and all these 'Bama boys say, "Damn, that sher is a ketchy name, iddinit?" And then the whole state jumps on the insult and hugs it. Jayzuz.

Alabama is the first state in alphabetical order, though it's pretty middlin' in all other categories. It's 28th in size: bigger than New York, smaller than Florida. It's 22nd in population: more people than Oregon, fewer than Maryland. Yawn. That's pretty much how I felt about it as I rolled diagonally southwestward across the state.

Scenically, it's no better than Georgia. Maybe it's even worse. At least the Georgia leg had Atlanta in it to break the monotony. True, Montgomery lay along the route, where I-85 junctioned with I-65, but Montgomery is no Atlanta; in fact, Montgomery was just in the way. Cruise Control had had me on auto-pilot for more than two hours since Hotlanta, and to have to interrupt that flow was an irritation. There was still nearly three hours left till Mobile, the only worthwhile circle on the Alabama page in the Rand-McNally. Green dots are ridiculously sparse on the state map; at first glance, you begin to think that R-M simply forgot to label Alabama's scenic routes. But when you look hard, you can see some in the northeastern counties of Marshall, Jackson, and DeKalb. There are some greenies in Bankhead National Forest in north central 'Bama, and some very legitimate ones in the northwest corner where the Natchez Trace Parkway crosses the Tennessee River in the top left corner of the state.

The RR2K route, of course, didn't come particularly close to any of those. And, from Montgomery on south, there is not a single green dot to be found. There is *officially* nothing scenic south of Fort Toulouse State Monument.

Given that, Alabama is a good state to drive through at night: you won't miss a damn thing. Unfortunately, this ride was by day, so it was just hour after hour of highway asphalt and thick-but-not-beautiful forests. I-65 would actually pass within ten miles of the Florida border, and it was tempting to take a little detour just to add The Sunshine State to the tally sheet for the trip.

But, with nothing compelling to look at for a few hours, and Florida looming closer and closer, my mind couldn't help but wander back to the Ghosts Of Roadtrips Past. More ramacks have gone to Florida than anyplace else. Some were getaways from the frigid Boston and Rochester winters, but summertime visits and even a short stint of pseudo-residency accounted for the rest.