

ROAD ROMP 2004

Day 11: Sunday, 20 June 2004

FOCK 2: The Rocking V

Moby and I pressed onward. With our due-easterly course, it seemed as though sun-in-the-eyes would not be an issue. But the road gods were feeling a bit playful, I guess, and conspired to hit us with a road/sun angle that not only blinded me from one mirror, it hit equally in both! It made me laugh that I couldn't turn either way to avoid the glare, so I just left my mirrors that way and enjoyed the dazzle.

UT-9 was one empty road, and I loved it. The best thing about such a road is that IT'S ALL MINE. I don't have to share it with anyone, or get out of anyone's way, or drive any particular speed to keep traffic flowing, or anything. I just relax, say, "Screw the rest of the world," and enjoy the scenery as it floats on by my windows. Utah was treating me right once again.

The views to the east were grand, and there were plenty of miles to go before anything resembling a big town would appear. Mt. Carmel Junction was next, where UT-9 met US-89. I passed the Golden Hills Motel. Hey! I've been there! Fresh from my Cedar Breaks experience in '03, and ready for my Zion hike the next day, I had z'ed a night away in one of the GHM's bargain rooms. I waved at the place. It didn't wave back.

US-89 south to Kanab was gorgeous. Last time through, I did this stretch in the dark, so I missed some choice views. The sun was illuminating the distant Vermillion Cliffs, and the steady green of the intervening ground made for a beautiful color mix. The dark ribbon of pavement curved off to new sceneries, and the show went on and on.



With Grand Canyon National Park just 100 miles away, we rolled on past the sign for Coral Pink Sand Dunes. I had forgotten about that place: the home of the original Surface Creep. White Sands NM had brought it to mind, and I had wished that I had saved that baggie full of pink grains, and had chosen one small spot at WSNM to lay a streak of pink amid all the white. But I soon dismissed that idea anyway. It would have tainted White Sands. It would have been like making beefalo.

As the miles glided easily by, I started to make a list of the pluses and minuses of missing the connection with Nate and forging on solo. It got quite lengthy:

- Plus: If the van misbehaved, I would be the only one inconvenienced, not Nate too. Somehow, that was important to me. It's one of the inherent risks of any roadtrip, but I would've felt guilty if it ruined someone else's ride.
- Minus: I would've liked to get to know the Natester better. He's a good dude, but he doesn't wear his heart on his sleeve. He's not an open-wide kind of guy; he keeps an air of mystery about him, probably by design. I would've respected that, but I still would've liked to see if I would have been allowed a peek inside.
- Plus: To quote my friend B, I could "fart with reckless abandon, and scratch my balls with impunity." Nor would Nate be around to tsk-tsk my swilling unhealthy D-Cokes, or my quaffing the occasional malt beverage behind the wheel. In short, there would be no behavioral self-consciousness (not that there would've been a real lot anyway).
- Minus: I wouldn't get to see him drunk. One of my goals for the week was to get him beyond tipsy. I'd love to see him loopy; that would have been fun.
- Plus: I wouldn't have to run. Nate was training hard these days, with long runs in high places. I needed no part of that.
- Minus: I would have to do all of the driving, not that that was real burden or anything.
- Plus: I could go wherever I felt like going, without having his mutual consent on it. He probably would not have objected to anything, but if, on a whim, I got the urge to go tour the sewers of Amarillo, I didn't need any negative vibes about the idea.
- Minus: He would miss out on a chance to do a casual and relaxing roadtrip, instead of his usual make-record-time, cross-country cannonball run.
- Plus: I wouldn't have to teach Nate how to drive Moby's current funkified quirks.
- Minus: There would be no one to share the awe of the Grand Canyon with, no one to say "holy shit, look at that!" to.
- Plus: I wouldn't have to share my bed space.
- Minus: I wouldn't get to exchange musical tastes with him. Though, being by far the youngest brother, I'm sure he has already heard most of what I have.
- Plus (BIG plus): No rearrangement necessary! The Mobe could stay comfortably cluttered. All the shit in the passenger seat could stay there, and the crap that took up half the bed could stay there.

It was a bit past sunset when we reached Kanab. This is a cool town. Not big, but not small by southern Utah standards. Kanab's posted motto is "Greatest Earth On Show," a nice turn of a phrase that sums up the surrounding land very well. It sure is nice.

The town has plenty of motels and shops and such. I passed Bob-Bon's Ridings Motel, where I had stayed the year before, and was tempted to stop and see if the Ramruns stickers were still on the fan blades. The Rainbow Café, where I had dined, was deservedly empty.

Through the large front window, I could see the bored hostess leaning on her elbow at the podium.

Dinner was definitely in order, though. I craved the classic ramack Burger-n-Beer combo at some place that had just a smudge of underbelly to it. I didn't know if Kanab had any underbelly, but I was willing to spend at least a little time searching.

The [Rocking V Café](#) had that old-time locals look about it, and the name sang of juicy cheeseburgers and cold draughts. I pulled into the lot across the street and headed in.

With one glance, I knew I had been misled. But I could also tell that it was not a bad thing. A pleasant, deep-voiced man about 40, who turned out to be the owner, greeted me and led me to a table along the wall. This place had a very nice atmosphere: low lighting, comfy, casual-but-classy (not the dive I expected), with easy jazzy tunes in the background. It had a bit of yuppie in it, but it had a good feel.



The menu was not what I had been expecting either. Burgers were not the focus of this board of fare. At first, it looked a little too dinnerish to me, with sauces and mushrooms and all the fancy-dancy little extras that I just don't relish. But all it takes is one word sometimes, and it wasn't Herkin this time. This time it was the Big L: Lasagna. Mmmmm. Double-



mmmmmm, in fact. After a week-and-a half of peanut butter or cold cut samiches, and an occasional burger, the thought of a nice slab of hot baked Three-Cheese Lasagna (parmesan, mozzarella and ricotta layered with fresh basil marinara, and served with roasted garlic focaccia – whatever that is) just sang to me. It *crooned* to me.

With a cold bottle of Fat Tire Full Suspension Ale to moisten the palate, and a salad that looked like it had just been plucked off a tree out back, I did a little blinging

while I awaited my repast. I was way behind. I always am. Once I get descriptive, detailed, and verbose, I never catch up. That's what I have the dang hand-held cassette voice recorder for. You would think I would know better by now: just jot down pertinencies and leave the prose for later.

The TCL arrived and my first thought was, this won't scratch the surface of my hunger. It was one almost square block of layered, cheesed, and sauced pasta, and it looked like I could have eaten about six of them. Turns out, though, that it was tremendous. It filled me up just enough, and left me with that contented belch feeling.

But the Rocking V had even more to offer. Upstairs is an art gallery filled with photography and painting by locals. They had some great stuff: nice scenic and creative photos from Zion and the Grand Canyon, many cool black-and-whites, and several funny Barbie photos – one had her posing in a martini glass (Happy Hour Barbie), and another one had her stretched out in a toaster oven (Heat Wave Barbie).

I gave the Rocking V two big thumbs up, thanked Vic (the co-owner), said that I hoped I would be back someday, and began the final mosey of the day, back into Arizona. I left Kanab at 9:16 pm. That town sits just three miles from the state line, so I pulled into Arizona at 8:21 pm. I thought I was supposed to be giving my extra hours back on my way home. No wonder Nate got confused.

Gaining the hour meant nothing to me though; it just meant that I would go to bed "earlier." Regardless of what any timing device said, I'd still be up before the sun and prepping for the Hole hike.

There was still the glow of daylight in the west. The sky above and most of the way down was crystal clean, but there was a dark bank above the horizon. Those were not low clouds, I realized; it was all smoke. Holy shit. The Muddy Mountains conflagration must have still been roaring. It made the western horizon look Mordor-ish, and again I hoped for smokeless skies tomorrow.

You know what I like? I like when you're on a dark empty road, and you have your high beams on, and another car comes into view in the distance, and when you flick your lever, his high beams go down. It's an absolute coincidence that we both did it at the same time, but it's so cool to get the brief feeling that you had the power to turn his lights down.

At 9:09 pm, whatever-time, I arrived at the campground in the little crossroads called Jacob Lake. The office was closed, so nobody asked for money. I chose site B-11, part way down the hill on the right. There were some other campers nearby, and they were being a bit lively (I suspect alcohol), but nothing was going to keep me awake.

It was another chilly night, so I blanketed up and dozed away. I'd be hiking The Grand Goddamn Canyon tomorrow.

