

Part XIII – September 23 to September 26

We had planned to start out on Friday, September 23, for a four-day, 1600-mile trip home. About 3:30 am, however, I developed an upset stomach and we were unable to set out after all. I was wasted for travel and spent most of the day in bed. Larry was able to work it out with the motel to stay another night, despite the fact that they were at capacity. That I thought I had food poisoning from the dinner salad I had eaten in their dining room the night before may have convinced them! Larry went out around 4 pm and got some chicken noodle soup, yogurts, and Coke for me. I ate cautiously and did OK. Meanwhile, Larry was at work reconfiguring the trip to cover 1600 miles in three days. It added over 100 miles a day, but we still could get home on Monday, September 26.

On Saturday, September 24, we set out for Independence, Missouri. As we crossed Kansas, we noticed oil wells sitting in cornfields near Oakley, Kansas. We also found another Merci Boxcar in Hays, Kansas! This one was at an American Legion Post and was painted bright red. We continued to see oil wells. Who knew Kansas was an oil state? We passed the exit at Wamego, Kansas, where there is an Oz Museum for *The Wizard of Oz*. We also saw a sign for a museum in Almo which had the Becher Bible



Another Merci Boxcar in Hays, Kansas



A windmill farm

and Rifle Church display! When we reached Independence, we were stuck in a huge traffic jam starting at about 6:45. We limped through and around to our motel where the desk clerk advised us that there was a Taylor Swift concert that had started at 7 pm.

On Sunday, September 25, we drove from Independence, MO, to London, Ohio. About 9 am, we passed north of Fulton, Missouri, which has a Winston Churchill Memorial. Churchill gave his famous "Iron Curtain" speech on March 5, 1946, at Westminster College in Fulton. To commemorate that visit, the college acquired the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Aldermanbury, an 800-year-old church in London which was slated for demolition due to damage from the Blitz. They reassembled it and repaired it. Along with a section of the Berlin Wall, this serves as a memorial to Winston Churchill. What a neat story! We did not visit the memorial, but we read the story in the AAA's guidebook. Once we reached Indiana, we were in a quagmire of road construction and not a minute too soon, I might add. The roads were in terrible shape. It seemed as if every Interstate was torn up all at once. The state of Indiana must have gotten a lot of stimulus money! Getting through Indianapolis was a nightmare!

On Monday, September 26, we drove from London, Ohio, to Lutherville, Md. Near Zanesville, Ohio, we passed Rushing Wind Biker Church! On our trip through Ohio, West Virginia, and Maryland, we noticed that the leaves were beginning to change to fall colors and that the wildflowers along the highways still were blooming beautifully. We continued to encounter road construction. We finally got home at 4:15 pm. Home at last!

There were several themes to our trip – 1) trains, 2) beautiful scenery, 3) some history, 4) wildlife, and 5) national parks. We had some disappointments, but we were able to compensate for them and see the silver lining. But mostly we will remember the trip of a lifetime and an appreciation for our beautiful country. I am happy to be able to share some of this with you. And I repeat, it is hard work having fun!