

## **Trip from Hell**

During my tenure as a graduate student at the University of Arkansas, I took a road trip along with four other graduate students and a professor to the Geological Society of America Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota. We headed north from Fayetteville, through Kansas City, and reached Iowa soon after dark. Our plan was to reach Minneapolis that night, but it did not work out quite that way.

The car was a small Plymouth, six of us packed in, along with our luggage. None of us had much money and we only had so much budgeted for gas. We were heading north on I-35 when our trip suddenly took a turn for the worse.

I was jammed in the back seat, sitting in the middle, trying to sleep when the screeching of brakes and rapid deceleration caused me to open my eyes, just in time to feel the impact as we struck a large deer that had run into our path from the darkened side of the road. I still have vivid memories of seeing the large buck slam into the windshield and then disappear over the roof.

The collision mangled the front end of Joe's Plymouth, as it did the big deer, dead on the side of the road. The Iowa Highway Patrol soon came to our rescue. The nearest town was Osceola and he took us there to stay for the night.

"We're on a tight budget, officer," Dr. M told him. "Please take us someplace reasonable."

The nice police officer took us to the Blue Haven Motel. It was old but nice and very reasonable. Next morning Dr. M, Joe, two Ed's, Garland and I found a body shop that would fix the Plymouth. We then took a taxi to the airport to secure a car rental, soon on our way again to Minneapolis. It was winter, darkness arriving early, and it was night when we finally reached our hotel.

Even though we were twenty-four hours late, the hotel had not given away our rooms, unlike one year at the St. Charles Hotel in New Orleans when I had to spend an entire convention stay on a cot in a clothes closet. This convention lasted two days and went mostly without a hitch, except for a side trip to a strip club where we were unfortunate enough to catch the act of a three-hundred pound woman. At least she was dressed in a nude body suit instead of au natural. The trip home was less eventful.

When we tried to rent a car for our return trip, we learned that there were none available in the entire city. We split into groups of two and began hitchhiking to Ames, the home of the University of Iowa and the place where Dr. M had graduated – a good thing as all our funds were growing tight.

"There's a Holiday Inn near campus. The first group that reaches it, tell the manager that there are six of us and that we only have forty dollars. They will let

us all stay in one room, even if some of us have to sleep on the floor. I guarantee.”

Either fortunately or otherwise, Joe and I were the first two to reach the Holiday Inn. To my utter amazement, the night manager smiled, shook his head and led us to a very nice room. He even brought cots so that none of us had to sleep on the floor. When the others arrived, we went across the street to a Mexican restaurant and had tacos, enchiladas and beer.

The remainder of the trip went without incident. We found a rental car and made it back to Fayetteville the next night. The following year the same fearless six of us went by car to the American Association of Geologist’s Convention in Dallas. We had no car wrecks and saw no strippers – well, at least none that weighed three-hundred pounds.