last year I wrote about my cross-
country drive from California
to Florida via I-15 and I-70. My
wife and I did it again, taking
I-10 and I-40 to visit my daugh-
ter in Los Angeles.

We shuddered to think about high gas prices,
so we brought along a cooler to carry food
and drinks to offset some of the fuel costs. Gas
ranged in price from $3.93 in Lake City, Fla., to
$4.79 in California, but most of the way, thanks
to Love’s Travel Stops, the price was $3.78, and
our car averaged 35 miles per gallon.

I-40 parallels and replaces much of the
famed Route 66 or the Mother Road as it
was named by writer John Steinbeck in his
classic “Grapes of Wrath.” Like the Trans-
Continental Railroad, this highway from
Chicago to Los Angeles opened up America
for tourism and travel, giving rise to motels,
diners and long-distance family vacations.

Signs along the interstate indicate access to
the scattered stretches of the old route. Detours
into McClean, Texas, and Tucumcari, N.M.,
were like taking a time machine back to the
1950s. These remnants of that bygone era belie
the bustling transportation and commerce
along the former cross-country route that
linked rural communities to large cities. The
old road became an artifact better suited for
nostalgia than expediency with the advent of
the interstate system.

This was all new territory to me as we zig-
zagged our way through Mississippi, Louisiana
and Arkansas, eventually reaching I-40 in
Little Rock.

It was neat to bask in the extensive fields
of crops that grew along the way. It was easy
to identify the fields of corn, cotton, peanuts
and rice. Other expanses were more difficult
to identify, and I wished there was some sort
of signage along the way, especially with the
golden, grassy fields in Oklahoma.

We dashed across Oklahoma and the Texas
panhandle on a rainy day with amber waves of
grain giving away to scrubby cattle ranges. We
went from longhorns to pronghorns as we neared
Tucumcari, N.M. We saw about a dozen small
antelopes, and cactus plants were becoming prev-
alent along with mountains, mesas and canyons.

Trivia fact: There are more Native American
residents in Oklahoma than any other state.

We visited Santa Fe, N.M., where no one
owns a lawn mower because the yards are all
desert dust, junipers and sage brush. After
getting our fill of art galleries, museums and
adobe buildings with flat roofs, it was on to
Arizona to see the Meteor Crater near Wins-
low. Man, that’s one big divot some 50,000
years old. I hope the boys at NASA are keep-
ing a sharp eye out for the next one. By the
way, Winslow has the fastest greens in Arizona
— says so on a billboard on I-40.

We headed to Phoenix by way of Sedona
with its beautiful red rock formations.

More trivia: New Mexico sells more chili
peppers than any other state, and Arizona has
the largest number of Native American tribes.

The last leg of our six-day, 2,733-mile jour-
cy was across the Sonoran Desert on I-10. We
were surprised to discover the General George
Patton Museum complete with a dozen tanks at
a little desert outpost in Chiriasco Summit, Calif.

Then we hit Los Angeles, where multi-
colored desert mesas and towering saguaro
cactus clumps gave way to civilization, and the
painted deserts became concrete canyons.

Before flying back to muggy Orlando, we
took a trip down the Pacific Coast Highway
and enjoyed the 70-degree summer weather. I
suspect new GCSAA CEO Mark Woodward
will miss the climate in San Diego.

The Mother Road gave us a mother load
of photographs and memories of places we’ve
never been before. And we definitely got our
kicks on that famous route immortalized by so
many American writers.

Certified superintendent Joel Jackson is executive
director of the Florida GCSA.