

# Shades Of Green

■ OPINION

**L**ast 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 daughter 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-

## A Long Cruise Along the Mother Road

BY JOEL JACKSON



DRIVING ALONG THAT  
FAMOUS ROUTE GAVE  
US OUR OWN LITTLE  
PIECE OF AMERICANA  
TO CHERISH FOREVER

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 Winslow. Man, that's one big divot some 50,000 years old. I hope the boys at NASA are keeping 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 journey 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.

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