

Friday January 26th 2018

We had an early lunch and drove away from Louise's house in Louisville about noon. We were headed for Athens, Alabama, where we had booked a room at the Holiday Inn Express to break up our drive to Grayton Beach, Florida.

The drive through Kentucky to Tennessee and beyond was pleasant, under sunny skies. However, the behemoth trucks were barreling along left and right. Friday afternoon rush? After we made our way through Nashville, the traffic thinned a bit and the highway became more like a parkway than an interstate.

Athens, Alabama came up before we knew it. We found the Holiday Inn Express quite satisfactory. A beer, a couple of episodes of "MASH" and so to bed.

Saturday January 27th 2018

We drove away from Athens, Alabama after a breakfast of scrambled eggs and sausage fritter. Rather than stay on the Interstate all the way, we took a more rustic route. After a while it became a bit too rustic. With what we saw it would be hard to prove that the United States was the richest country on earth.

We came upon a huge Korean Hyundai auto plant in the middle of nowhere.

When we saw little white cotton balls in the fields we knew we were in the poorest part of Alabama. The series of poor churches were just too much.

We saw a Publix grocery store about thirty minutes from our destination so we stocked up on essentials.

We were into the rental cottage before sundown and unpacked a ton of stuff. We had a beer to celebrate.

Louise cooked up hamburger steaks for supper.

Then we watched the final three episodes of The Good Wife.

We had a very noisy rain storm. Nothing like a tin roof for a quiet night.

Sunday January 28^h 2018

It was still raining cats and dogs when we woke up about 06:30 so we decided to snuggle in the nice warm bed. It was only 62F so we turned on the heat to get the chill out of the air.

It took a while to register, but the trees have leaves!

This vacation is a bit of a homecoming for Louise as she spent many years living in Jacksonville, Tallahassee and Pensacola. Louise is very partial to North Florida calling it the true Florida. Louise

does not like south Florida.

We'll sort ourselves out a bit and take it easy today. Louise hoped for a long walk here through this charming olde beach neighborhood, but the weather has determined otherwise. It will be a good day to get sorted out and to make popcorn and perhaps watch "The Last of the Mohicans" this afternoon.

In the morning we drove east to the Publix grocery store in the vicinity of the Watercolor housing development.

We came home for a grilled cheese sandwich and tea. Then we drove west through Sandestin, Destin and Fort Walton Beach on the so-called Miracle Mile to visit TJ Maxx about 30 miles away in the Mary Esther suburb. It is on the southwest side of the massive Eglin Air Force base. Much of the naval and military development in the area is a legacy of Congressman Bob Sikes. Eglin was the primary training location for the Doolittle Raid on the Japanese mainland. Almost \$20 million would be spent on construction at Eglin during the four years, 1941–1944.

It poured rain all the way there and back. The good news was that we found a cutting board, apron, popcorn popper and cotton place mats - mission accomplished. Back home, we decided to test the popcorn popper while watching videos and sipping white wine spritzers.

The homogenization of America was impossible to ignore. As we moved from community to community the same franchise stores popped up. Surely America has reached the saturation point for Burger King, Pizza Hut, Panera, DQ, McDonalds, Taco Bell, et alia.

Supper was half a thin crust pizza followed by "The Last of the Mohicans". We hope they did not make a sequel. Louise wanted to see it, having avoided James Fennimore Cooper all these years with some regret. It was photographed in and near Asheville, North Carolina. The photography and Daniel-Day Lewis made it worth seeing.

It was a nice, very rainy day. We had accomplished what we needed to do, which was precious little, but all in all, we feel ready to start our Florida vacation.

Monday January 29^h 2018

It was not raining when we got up at 07:13 – we immediately made drip coffee, tackled the NYT crossword, and noticed the lack of sunshine as well as rain. If the rain holds off we will check out this area by walking about.

We declared today a holiday and vowed not to get in the car.

Our street in Grayton Beach has cottages, sort of jumbled in together, lots of big trees live oaks, magnolias, palms, and shrub foliage. A confederate jasmine is growing on the fence outside the kitchen window, but not blooming now. A block or so away is the Gulf in one direction, in the other there is a small groups of shops, a pub-like restaurant, and we don't know what else.

We spent the morning doing nothing – just as planned. We had a bowl of pea soup for lunch, that Louise enhanced by adding milk as well as water. That was followed by a single sinful nibble out of

the package of Girl Scout Samoa cookies that Louise had purchased from a shy girl outside Kroger's several months ago.

Then we went for a short walk from the cottage to the beach. On the way we saw one of the original abodes. It was very weathered unpainted board with a plaque showing it dated from 1926. In New Zealand it would be called a "bach". The building was completely shuttered and would probably sell for one million. The sun was blazing and the beach was pure white. In an hour we perhaps passed ten people. A lone C-130 flew about half a mile offshore going east and later came back heading west.

We took photos to remember our first walk on a Gulf beach. When got back to the cottage we e-mailed a teaser photo of the "crowded" beach.