

TRIP 2 Healey trip to North Rim of the Grand Canyon (2002)

Day 1, Charlie and I had *the best* trip yet, partly because we didn't know what to expect, we just went. We left a day sooner than planned, Thursday, 8/22, realizing we would need more than 2 days to reach the North Rim of The Grand Canyon. Our reservations had a two-day cancellation clause. We left the convertible top home. Wearing new UV protecting shirts and caps, with Velcro-on neck scarves, we packed up with just what we *needed*, no room to carry extras. We also wore golf gloves to keep our hands protected and solar screen on our faces. We took routes 101 S, 126 E, 5 S, 14, 138, 18 E, 15 N, and 40 E. We traveled to Needles, CA for the first night encountering 100+ heat once we left the coast. I kept (2) one quart drinking bottles of water in my foot well, in a 6-pack sized insulated bag. At every opportunity, gas station or rest stop, I refilled the bottles with ice, if available, and water. We had fuel pump trouble in Victorville, as we idled in traffic. The car died. A man jumped from his truck to help Charlie push the Healey out of the busy intersection, simultaneously I moved into the driver seat to steer into some shade. We discovered on our previous trip to Tahoe that the car would start again, once it had cooled. 10 minutes later we set off. When we got to a gas station in Barstow the pump quit again. Charlie hooked up the spare fuel pump he had prepared before we left home, just in case it would be needed. That made us more confident to continue on in the heat. As usual the Healey and our solar outfits brought smiles, waves and thumbs up. This was fun as the stretch of road so far wasn't very scenic, mostly high desert. It was 322 miles to Needles taking us 8 hours, elevation 2770'. We were road weary, too long a day in the desert in an open car! We had wind burned lips and tired eyes. We turned in early so we could start the next day before the heat built up. We were so tired we had trouble falling asleep.

Day 2, Friday, as we had our continental breakfast at the Super 8, another guest was chatting with us about our car and intended trip. Raymond told us we *had* to include Cameron Trading Post, Oak Creek Canyon and Sedona in our Arizona trip. I had already booked Super 8 reservations for the expected 5-day trip so I cancelled our return nights and left the agenda open. We stayed on Rt. 40 through Kingman to Flagstaff, 210 miles, 6 hours, with *increasingly* interesting views and higher elevations. We put Vaseline on our lips to protect from the drying heat and wind. Just before Flagstaff the elevation was 7335! In Flagstaff, at 6910', the engine was missing and running poorly. We checked into Super 8 for the night and pulled out the yellow pages and local map to find a car parts store. The spark plugs were fouling due to the elevation. Charlie also asked at Checker Auto if they knew of anyone experienced with older British cars. They did! We had the Flagstaff phonebook and the cell phone in the car. Their recommendation, John Graves, was out but his wife was helpful and said he'd call once he returned. Charlie and he chatted a bit then he came to the Super 8 where they looked over the engine. He advised certain spark plugs in the next heat range. The Healey's carburetors don't compensate for elevation changes like in modern cars. Before it got dark we proceeded to Checker Auto for a back up set of spark plugs and to Wal-Mart for sewing notions to modify our neck shrouds. We don't like driving at night in the Healey, having such small taillights. We felt reassured that the car would now be able to continue. John told us that the best Indian trading post in the state was at Cameron and that we must have a Navajo taco while we were there. We ate dinner at a diner next door and went to bed early.

Day 3 was awesome, 220 miles, taking Rt 89 N. we passed through pines in the National Forest at Flagstaff and down into the Navajo Reservation's Moenkopi Plateau, at 5000'. At Bitter Springs we took Alt 89 W, crossing the Colorado River on the Navajo Bridge at Marble Canyon, and into the Kaibab National Forest to Jacob Lake. Then we headed south on Rt 67 to the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. The Painted Desert and Vermilion Cliffs were so exciting, the red earth and rocks a sight to behold. The roads in AZ are *good*, better than California's. Traffic was *very* light and we felt that all this beauty was just waiting for us to experience in our special roadster, it could have been our own time warp just us in our '55 and the spectacular landscape. I couldn't wait to get traveling each morning. It's definitely a great trip when the traveling is the *best part*, not just being at the destination. We saw an elk and a javelina, wild pig, unfortunately both as road kill. There were several hawks and prairie dogs. The climb to the rim was horseshoe turns giving us panoramic views of the plateau as we ascended. At Jacob Lake, 7921' we

gassed up, as we did at nearly every opportunity because the car has a 14-gallon tank and the location of the next service station is a mystery. One of the station attendants there had this huge smile on his face. He kept looking at us. Soon he and another attendant, both young men, came over, their camera in hand, and asked “*What are you driving and may we take our picture next to it?*” Every day we got pleasure from the attention paid to us in the car. Before entering Grand Canyon Park we were at 8840’! The entrance booth is at 8827’. It was still hot at that elevation, but we were delighted with our day, exhilarated with accomplishing our goal of reaching the North Rim, and that the car was performing so well. I must say I left home with confidence that our trip would be fine because Charlie understands the Healey and can fix it as required as long as he has the needed parts and tools. We parked in the lot and looked over into the Canyon. The North Rim is much less developed than the South Rim, giving it an older era feeling. We went for lunch in the Café. We had a small corner room at the lodge motel. It is mostly log cabins there. We had a fine dinner at 8:15 PM, which I’d reserved when I booked the room before leaving home. There is nowhere else for dinner. There are also campgrounds back along the entrance road. We walked to Bright Angel Point and had a pleasant evening talking to other travelers and of their journeys as the sun set over the Canyon. One couple had driven from Vermont, another from Kansas, and others had flown into Las Vegas and then made a tour of the near-by National Parks. We think the North rim is prettier than the South, but we were there at wintertime so it may not be a fair comparison. We’ve traveled 752 miles so far and slept well.

Day 4, breakfast in the Grand Canyon Lodge was first come first served buffet. We arrived early. I had on a Syracuse sweatshirt and Charlie a SU cap. Next to us were a couple dressed the same, in their SU clothes! As the four of us were all alumni we decided to eat together. Joan graduated the same year as Charlie. Lowell was raised in Niagara Falls. She and her husband are journalists. They now live in Philadelphia and were including the 1st SU game of the season, against Brigham Young, in their western vacation. It was fun to share breakfast and old memories of Syracuse with them. We were on the road again by 9:15 AM. We got more efficient at packing the car each day and can be ready quickly. We retraced some territory, but saw it going the other direction. A flock of wild turkeys were in the meadow on the Kaibab Plateau. Wild flowers in bloom all over. During the whole trip the skies were blue. It was beautiful, so far away from the usual busy life back home. We stopped at the Vermilion Cliffs to take a photo of our car near a gigantic rock. A bow hunter, it was deer season, stopped to offer to take a photo for us. He didn’t get any deer. He said all the deer were all in the National Park where they know they are safe! We had seen deer right next to the Lodge. At Bitter Springs we took Rt 89 N to Page at Lake Powell. This was our shortest drive, 125 miles. The vistas to Page are pretty too. The Grand Canyon Dam and blue, blue Lake Powell. I think the red earth intensifies the appearance of the water’s color. When we checked into our motel the temperature was 102 *in the shade*. We cranked up the AC and went out for lunch at an excellent Italian restaurant. We took a slow walk around town, relaxed in our room and after the temperature cooled some went back to Stromboli’s for dinner. We were getting used to going to bed early.

Day 5, Monday, we got to Prescott by Rts 89 to Flagstaff, and Alt 89 S, 232 miles. By 10 AM we pull into the Cameron Trading Post. It is a small complex with a Post Office and Motel. It is quite a sight when you walk in. Beautiful handwork is everywhere. We headed for the dining room and *did* order a Navajo taco, The Warrior’s Special, yummy! While sitting there I noticed from the many Navajo rugs displayed around the perimeter of the room one in particular, a tree filled with birds of all colors, finely done and beautiful. My wish came true. *We bought it* before we left! We had it shipped for safety and convenience. I would have felt obligated to keep it with me, at all times, during the rest of the trip otherwise and I didn’t want to stuff it into the trunk. I couldn’t stop smiling for miles once we were underway again. Charlie said it was the most expensive breakfast he’s ever bought. We passed through Flagstaff into the lovely Oak Creek Canyon and Sedona. Again we see amazing red rock formations and the lush green wooded creek area. I took a Quilt History Tour of New England in August of 2000. My roommate, for the week, lived in Sedona. While in traffic at a red light in Sedona I poured some water from our bottle over Charlie’s hat, as he requested. It was a hot day! He said that felt great! The lady in the car next to us had a good laugh and was smiling as the traffic light turned green. I found Audrey’s home phone number at the local quilt shop, as she is also a quilt teacher. She directed us to their beautiful home, which is on a lot extending down to Oak Creek. Her husband has been working many years to enhance their descent with rock paths, steps, natural railings,

and native plantings. It was spectacular, like a mini park. Rich told us of the wild life he sees from his property including a golden and a bald eagle. We enjoyed the visit and set off refreshed. What a surprise it was when we began the climb up to Jerome, an old copper mining town, 7023'. Charlie likened it to going into the Alps with the town literally built on the edges of the mountain. We were mostly in 2nd gear. It was so steep and twisty, one lane each way, no shoulders. We stopped at a park in Jerome and rested the car and ourselves in the shade while we conversed with some of the people there. The Healey invites conversation. We got to Prescott and had a nice dinner and evening after another fantastic day on the roads of Arizona.

Day 6, today we will travel the historic Route 66! We take 89 N, and 40 W, to Ash Fork, 5700', and on to Kingman, 3341', for the night, 158 miles. Every day reaches the 100s + and the elevation is usually 5000' or greater. We had no more car trouble. Setting off early we encounter a pronghorn antelope in the Prescott National Forest, slowing down it crosses in front of us! We have seen more wildlife in Arizona than in our three trips into Canada. It is still scenic, but not as unique as the previous three days. Once onto Rt 66 it feels nostalgic, like we're in the old TV show *Route 66*, not in a Corvette, but in our BN1 Austin Healey. The town of Seligman is primed for photos with storefronts and gas stations reminiscent of the 50's. Several vintage cars are parked, as props, on the street. Immediately we get waves and "*Like your car!*" We stop in to buy some postcards. The shopkeeper recommends we transverse Rt 66 all the way to Topock, at the AZ / CA border. It's a bit rugged, she adds. As we continue traveling it is mostly desolate and plain high desert. There are successive signs similar to the Burma Shave ads seen years ago. These were fun:

Proper distance / to him was bunk / they pulled him out / of some guys trunk

Don't try passing / on a slope / unless you have / a periscope

A man a miss / a car a curve / he kissed the miss / and missed the curve

Dim your lights / behind a car / let folks see how / bright you are

The blackened forest / smolders yet / because he flipped / his cigarette

Two driving advisories had some of the signs missing:

Violets are blue / roses are pink / on the graves of those /

Pause avoid that / run down feeling /

Humm, I wonder what the endings were. We got into Kingman and covered the cockpit and windshield with a vinyl cover we'd made the evening before we left home. It was too hot out to put the full car cover on until later. Charlie felt the cockpit cover was adequate, but I sleep better hiding the car under a full cover. I'm protective of the little beauty. We walked to Denney's, browsed some at K Mart, and later ate a buffet dinner at the Flying J truck stop. It was another Healey day and early to bed. Does Healey mean fun? Yes, I'm sure it must say so in the dictionary.

Day 7, Wed., 8/28, 6:20 AM and we're on Rt 66 W through Kingman. We'll head for Barstow, 212 miles today. The last leg of the longest continuous stretch of old route 66 is memorable, as challenging as the climb to Jerome, except the elevation is lower, 2770' at Mountain Springs summit and 3350' at Sitgreaves Pass. Never had we been on such a remote road, except Rt 20 W to Bella Coola, British Columbia, in 1974. Again we were in 2nd gear most of the time. The turns were *really* tight. Charlie said, "*This is a road to behold!*" The shopkeeper at Seligman was right it *is* rugged. Two pickup trucks passed us, one in each direction. Some people *do* live out there along the way. We saw wild burros near the road! We reached the town of Oatman, an old mining town, by 7:30 AM. It is like a movie set with old western storefronts, a woman is sweeping up after a burro, one is braying up ahead on the road. Too bad that it is so early, the shops and cafes for a breakfast stop aren't open yet. We are out of town nearly as quickly as we entered. It is so small. Before we leave the backcountry we see 3 more burros, a Jack, a Jenny and their foal, just 10' away. In an open car only 3' high this *does* feel close. Soon the ruggedness is gone as we approach route 40. We traveled a total of 159 miles on historic route 66, once known as the Main Street of America going from Chicago to California. As we are about to enter CA we cross the Colorado River again, an oasis in the desert, at Topock, AZ. Just 15 more miles to Needles where we stop for breakfast. The transition from our

exciting slow paced journey in AZ to traveling on the interstate is noticed immediately as semi-trucks and SUVs *rush* by, cell phones to ears. We seldom went above 60 MPH, slower when conditions called for it. Charlie used pullouts when he could to let vehicles behind pass. We got to Barstow for a late lunch and saw a movie that night.

Day 8, Thursday, 8/29, our last day and just 186 miles left. We could have traveled longer yesterday, but doing a Healey trip is not ordinary and deserves to be enjoyed with no rush. We got smart two days ago when we took off our solar shirts and caps/scarf at the rest stop and ran them under the faucet, donning them again over our T-shirts, soaking wet. We now know how to achieve air conditioning in a 1955 roadster! We repeated this at each opportunity, drying within an hour in the furnace hot desert. It was quite amusing, not only to us, to see each other when we exited the rest rooms dripping wet. We returned on the same roads as day 1. Again the more monotonous drive was alleviated by the reactions of fellow travelers. The contrast of traveling in a modern car and the Healey are - the joy of experiencing the ride with all the senses and seeing the faces of others light up with smiles as they pass by. The trip was 1665 miles. We are learning how to travel better, in this car, with each excursion. The seats are comfortable and we can't wait for the next trip. Home again is good too. The car still needs a bath, but the laundry, bookwork, housework and yards are caught up. Charlie is already making some improvements to the car he thought of while we traveled. I must say that I had it easier than Charlie, simply being a passenger free to look around and above. He had to concentrate on the driving conditions and the car's well being. He said the cruise control he installed made driving more relaxing and the trip even more enjoyable, not having to check the speedometer or adjust foot pressure on the throttle all the time.

Have a happy Labor Day. We will be off to Home Depot to get a framework for hanging the Navajo rug, which is called Tree of Life. There are 60 birds on it, 3 in nests, so unique. It is an original work and I am very proud and delighted to have it in our home to enjoy forever and remind us of the great week we had. Soon I'll update the photo album and scrapbook.

Carol and Charlie

