

BROKE DOWN.
A MILLION MILES FROM HOME.
NOW WHAT?



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with **DANIEL E. JETTER**

*ADVENTURES OF
ROAD JUNKIES*

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THE PRAIRIE INCIDENT

This is a continuation of the previous story - yes, sometimes incidents happen more than once on a long distance trip!

August, 2005. LaCross, Kansas. It had been a long day's drive, actually over 13 hours of steady driving and we arrived in Joplin late afternoon Thursday. The HAMB drags was the reason we'd come and they'd start tomorrow-Friday. In the parking lot of the motel were lots of gassers, regular street driven coops and sedans of the 30s and 40's. Of course, 50's sedans were there too. The drags at the strip weren't going to happen until Saturday, but cars and people were showing up early.

In the morning, a scenic 'cruise' was scheduled and we didn't want to miss that. The only thing we needed to decide was which car we should drive-Roger's '40 Stude Coop or Dan's '47 Chevy Aerosedan. The cruise would follow Old Route 66 through Joplin and Carthage and into Springfield, approximately 70 miles from Joplin. Reason is there was a large swap meet there that day and we spent most of the day at the swap meet. After a full day of driving and walking the swap meet we headed back to Joplin.

By the time we got back to the motel Friday late, the lot was already full of more arrivals, eager for the drags the next morning. Anticipation was high so the parking lot party lasted well into the morning hours but not us, we hit the beds in our room about midnight.

The Mo-Kan Dragway was 20 miles from our motel, in the middle of a cornfield...which by this time of the year the corn was about 6 feet tall. It was hard to see the strip for the tall corn. By the time we got there around noon, there were already plenty of cars in the pit area. The first of the 'fun runs' was scheduled for around 3pm so we walked the pits and looked at cars. When the call came for staging, both Dan and I pulled our cars to the lanes and got ready to "race" each other. This was like regular drag racing with a full tree-stage light, 3 amber bulbs, a green and a red. Since Roger had a 400 ci

small block in this Stude and me a lowly 350 ci , Roger smoked Dan right from the green light. Roger ran a 15.5 quarter and 98 mph...trying to stop from that speed to make the return road was a little tuff since the shut-off area was short. He had to drop the Studey into second and pump the brakes in order to slow enough to make the turn. Dan's sedan ran a 17.50 quarter at about 80.

The races lasted until 10pm and by the time we'd gotten back to the motel, the parking lot was already full-lots of after-racing partying going on so it was hard to find a parking spot for the night. The day had been a complete blast. It's just too bad it was so far from Denver, otherwise we'd be doing it every year.

After fixing the brakes, we headed north on two-lanes for a while, then west, skirting around a massive late afternoon thunderstorm south in Wichita. We made it to Salina and decided to spend the night there.

Monday morning, we found a two-lane going west and took it. We both dislike driving Interstates so a two-lane is prime driving for us, we enjoy going through small towns on the way. About three hours out of Salina, Dan called on the CB, said he had a growling sound coming from the rear of the car and he didn't know what it was. We stopped and traded cars so I could try to figure out what it was. Deduced it was a rear wheel bearing going bad -won't make it the rest of the way home on that! We were just east of the small town of LaCross, Kansas, maybe we can find a parts store there that can press on a new bearing for us...and that's always a difficult find on the road-very few places have that capability, but it can be done. Sure enough, A NAPA store was in town-seems there's always a NAPA store in nearly every small town that farmer's depend on. We asked if they could do a rear wheel bearing for a '57 Chevy rear end and they said they couldn't get it in until tomorrow, but they'd have to order it. We thanked them for that and said we always carry a spare so don't need it, just need it removed and pressed on. They couldn't do it immediately but there was a farm equipment store east of town (we'd passed it) and the guy was a hot rodder - had a few nice cars. We pulled into the lot and found out the owner was at lunch. Not having a choice, we decided to go get lunch ourselves. When we got back he

was there, we asked if he could press the bearing on, he said sure but we'd have to pull the axle ourselves. That's no problem for us. He volunteered his shop-had us move the car inside out of the heat and sun. He let us use the big shop jack and we pulled tire, drum and axle in a few minutes. The axle bearing was taken off and the new one pressed on. A half hour later the car was back together. As we thanked him we learned about his collection of Fords and looked at several pictures in his office – he owned several mid-60s hardtops with big engines. He also invited us to come down for their 'show' in mid-March and to this day we get flyers announcing their event. Unfortunately, we've never made it back there. By the time we left LaCross, it was late afternoon and it took us another 5 hours to get home, arriving just before it got dark.