

The Day We Rode Over an Outlaw... Twice!



Mark & Karen, Mike & Debbie, Teresa & Sammy, Sheri & Ken

The forecast for the first weekend of March looked very promising, so we planned to make a full day of riding! I looked in “Roadside America – Guide to Uniquely Odd Tourists Attractions” and found some interesting sights to see near the Muscle Shoals/Florence, Alabama area.

Sammy & Teresa Estes, Ken & Sheri Bobbit, along with Karen and I were ready to roll at 8:00 am. We would pick up Mike & Debbie Bishop about 40 miles into the trip.

It was 42 degrees when we started rolling, but with clear blue skies the temperature slowly warmed up into the mid 60’s. A perfect day to ride!

We got on the I-269 loop around Memphis and headed east to Hwy 72. This is a nice 4 lane divided highway that usually doesn’t have much traffic. Today was no different.

We stop at a familiar gas station along the route to hook up with Mike & Debbie. This station includes a Baskin Robbins ice cream shop that we’ve all stopped at several times on a hot Mississippi afternoon! Once we include Mike & Debbie into the fold, we’re off!

We continue east on this beautiful clear morning. Everyone is excited to be on the road with friends since we’ve been couped up for winter. Just two weeks ago, we were all snowed in!

A couple hours later, we stop in Muscle Shoals/Florence area for a photo op at two historic music recording studios.



Recording Capital

The first recording studio we stop at is FAME (Florence Alabama Music Enterprise). Since opening its doors in 1961, FAME has welcomed a who’s who of musicians to include the Rolling Stones, Allman Brothers, Lynyrd Skynrd, Reba McEntire, Tim McGraw, Alabama and Aretha Franklin, just to name a few! Even The Osmond Brothers!



FAME Recording Studio

From here, we rode down the road to Muscle Shoals Sound Studios (MSSS).



Muscle Shoals Sound Studios

MSSS opened in early 1969 by the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section (also known as the Swampers). The Swampers played on over 200 albums, with over 75 RIAA Gold and Platinum records, and hundreds of hit songs with artists such as Lynyrd Skynyrd, Bob Dylan, Duane Allman, Paul Simon, Art Garfunkel, Bob Seger, Staples Singers, Rod Stewart, Leon Russell, Willie Nelson, Cat Stevens, Dr. Hook, and Eddie Hinton.

Our next stop was to run over outlaw “Mountain” Tom Clark. Yes, the plan was to ride our motorcycles over him!



This plaque states the following:
”Mountain” Tom Clark Hanged September 4, 1872. This notorious outlaw gang leader who boasted no

one would ever run over Tom Clark lies buried near the center of Tennessee Street where now all who pass by do run over him. In 1872 Clark, who terrorized helpless citizens during the Civil War, confessed to at least nineteen murders, including a child, and was hanged with two companions. Although graves were already dug in a nearby field, outraged townspeople interred Clark beneath Tennessee Street thus bringing his boast to nought.

As we ride to the Florence City Cemetery, we run over Tom Clark before stopping and parking the bikes. We take a few photos and enjoy the short history lesson.



Tom Clark Buried Behind Us

Leaving the cemetery, we turn left and one by one run over Tom Clark one more time!

Next on the itinerary is to stop at the University of North Alabama campus to see the lion. According to RoadsideAmerica.com *“Since 1974, the University of North Alabama has been the only U.S. college whose mascots are live lions. Current mascots Leo III and his mate Una live in a public*

outdoor “habitat” on campus, with plenty of viewing areas, built in 2007 at a cost of \$1.3 million.” Unfortunately, Una passed away in June 2020 (probably from COVID19).



Leo III

Leo III was beautiful! He had a large living area with a pond and place to get out of the weather. I’m sure all of the students are proud to see their mascot daily as he lives in the middle of this college campus.

After the short stop, we climb back on the bikes and head over to the Wilson Dam Waterfall. This was only a few miles away. We cross the river in-between Florence and Muscle Shoals, then follow a two-lane road back to the dam and waterfall area.



Wilson Dam Waterfall

This was an awesome little waterfall! We also enjoyed the view of the dam from this vantage point. White pelicans migrating north had stopped to fill up on fish rushing through the spillway. An unexpected addition to the sightings of the day!



American White Pelicans

Now, it's time for lunch! We find a local place in Muscle Shoals called "Swamp John's". If you like catfish and oysters, this place is for you!

We had a great time getting caught up with our friends as we ate lunch. With the pandemic and winter, it's been a while since we've spent any time with anyone.

The ride home was like moving meditation as we rode along enjoying the birth of a new spring riding season. Everyone enjoyed the opportunity to get out on their Gold Wings on this beautiful sunny day!

We arrived home around 6:00 pm that evening. After 300 plus miles, it had been a long, but satisfying day. A chance to reconnect with friends, our bikes and nature. And, even run over an outlaw... twice!