

Story by Patricia Arrigoni



Left: The author

8mm Memories of The Mother Road

*A family trip on Route 66
during the war years
gives birth to
a contemporary video*



Left: The author (right) and her sister Judy. **Below left:** A shot through the windshield, somewhere outside Flagstaff AZ. **Below, center, & right:** The authors' parents, Lloyd & Elise Larry



All 8mm movie clips courtesy the author

The flapping of wings startles me as I walk home from school. It is a chilly November day in Danville, Illinois. I shiver when I look up to see a splendid flock of geese headed south for the winter. The scene is wild and beautiful, and it makes me smile. Soon, I will be leaving too, headed west as we do every year when the prairie land my father farms has been harvested, and the ground is frozen for winter.

We will be visiting my father's family in Los Angeles and Santa Monica. My leaving is a secret from the kids at school, because they get jealous. My mom has met quietly with my teacher to pick up assignments and is checking on schools in the Los Angeles area.

I hunker down in my thick wool coat as I hurry along and think about my secret. We will leave this weekend.

Mom has already packed and shipped a truck load of clothes for the California trip. It is 1943, and World War II is still raging in Europe, but I am too young to understand much about wars.

The coming trip excites me. Soon, my sister Judy and I will be playing on Muscle Beach in Santa Monica, just down from where my grandmother lives. We will practice our body surfing and build sand castles under a hot California sun, and maybe even play some tennis. And we'll get there by driving Route 66, the romantic Mother Road.

To some people, exotic traveling means a journey on the Silk Route to China, or the road to Zanzibar, or to Morocco, or someplace in fairy tales I have read or in movies I have seen. To me, Route 66 is the most romantic of all for it takes us to the land of orange groves, movie stars, and endless sunshine. It will deliver us from the cold, bleak prairie winters of Illinois, to our California dreamland.

I know my mom will bring along her 8mm movie camera to record our adventures as she has every year.

Daddy does all the driving while Mom hangs out the window shooting moving pictures. Sometimes she shoots right through the windshield or points the camera at Judy and me in the back seat or at my dad driving. It is many years before there will be a route 66 TV series, but we are making our own simple family films which will record forever what life was like along the Mother Road in the early 1940s.

BIRTH OF A VIDEO

My nostalgia for these Route 66 trips is awakened when I inherit my mother's homemade movies. I have them transferred to video and sit long hours looking back and remembering. I begin to think it might be fun to drive Route 66 one more time with my sister. We could shoot some new film footage and



Combine it with short vignettes from these family trips of the past. Fall would be a good time to go, when the geese head south for the winter.

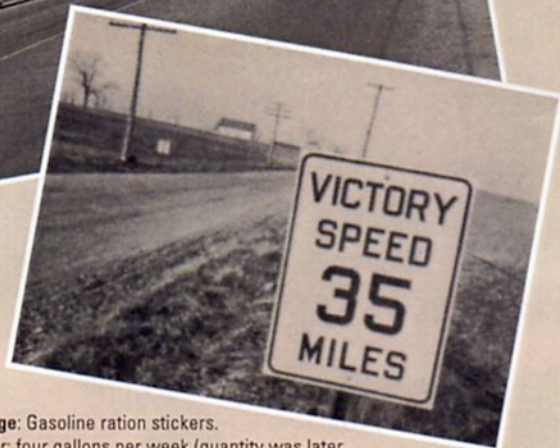
What starts as a simple little digital project quickly escalates when some talented young film makers become interested and volunteer their time to help create a truly professional video/DVD. I agree to underwrite their expenses if they will make the trip and do the filming.

In the end, we set up a portable video studio in a rented motor home, and they drive it from California to Illinois and back.

My sister and I fly to east-central Illinois and meet them at our family farm where they shoot the fall harvest. Since this is where our family trips started, I think it can serve as the beginning of our project, but as Route 66 started in Chicago, everyone decides a side trip out there would be a good idea.

As we begin the 2,448 mile trip west across the eight states, Judy and I drive a rental car and stay in motels while the crew drives, sleeps, works, and eat in the RV. We manage to meet up with the filming crew for a few lunches and dinners along the route. The filming project takes twenty-two days during October. Participants in this intrepid journey include Tom Caudle, Wesley Middleton, Misha Syeed, Jim Murphy, Judy Tobias, and myself.

The result of the odyssey is a soon to be released video titled, "Old Fashioned Fun on Route 66." To find out more about our Route 66 odyssey, click on www.66memories.com

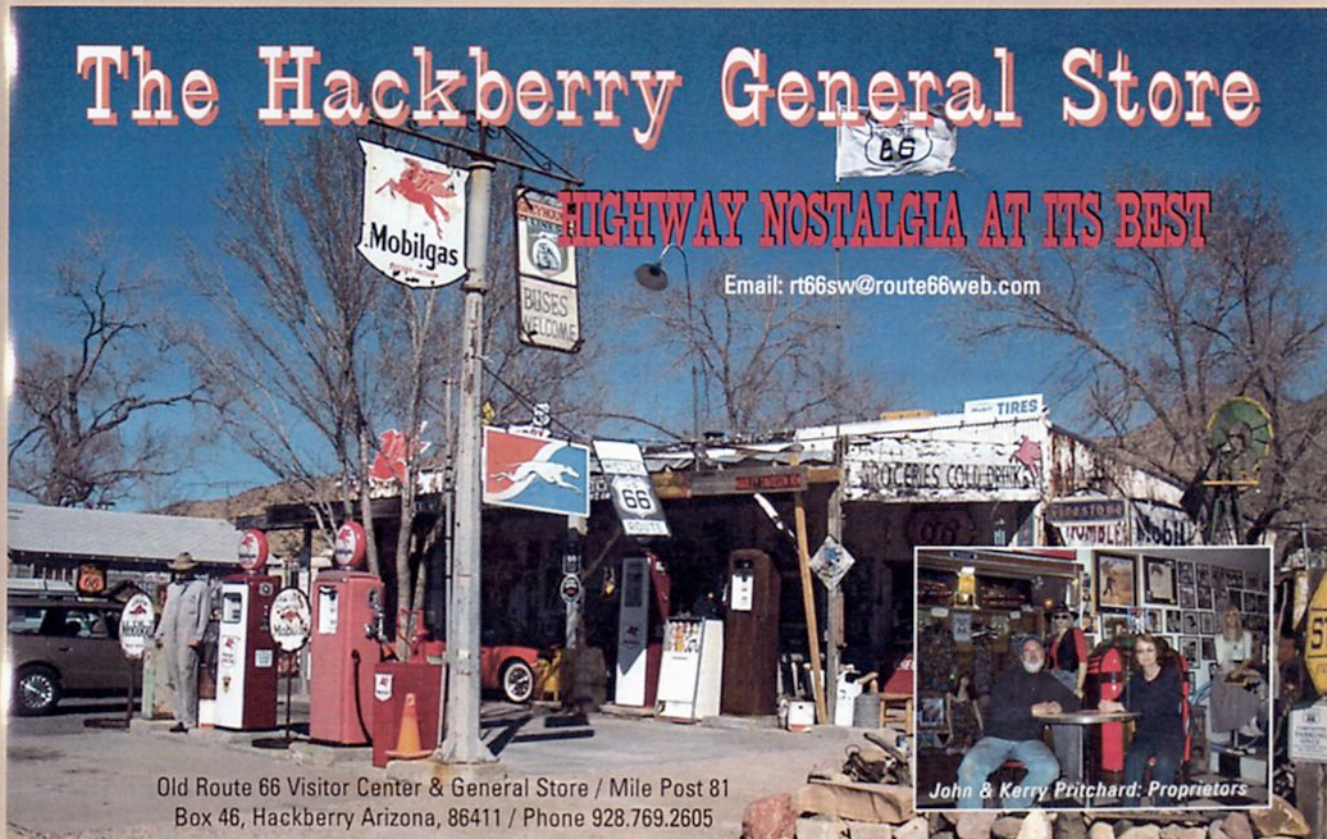


Facing page: Gasoline ration stickers. "A" sticker; four gallons per week (quantity was later reduced to three gallons per week). "B" sticker (not shown); essential driving, additional allocations. "C" sticker; essential activities, additional allocations. "T" sticker; unlimited fuel (truckers, etc.) **This page, top:** North Figueroa street (Route 66) through Los Angeles during WWII. Notice billboard advertising Nucoa Oleomargarine "It's delicious in cooking too." **Immediately above:** To conserve tires and gas, a war time speed limit of 35 MPH was posted in March 1942. Route 66 Magazine collection

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