

*Monday, December 12th – Wednesday, December 14th*

After looking at the weather, I decided to use a vacation day to make it up to Nashville on Wednesday, and then the rest of the way to Ohio over the weekend. I'd work the other weekdays, and visit friends in Nashville for a few days along the way. But first: two days in Dallas.



*Reunion Tower*

Turns out I'd spent Sunday night drinking beer and eating dinner at the fabulous Lee Harvey's before wandering down the streets to find out that the local grocery store had closed early. I was short on food, so Monday I tried again during my lunch hour and was able to find some provisions.



*Mrs. Freshley is full of LIES!*

Urban groceries are strange places. I really only had one night in Dallas; my host was kind enough to let me check out late on Tuesday (after work) so my plan was to try and make it to Arkansas that night and then on to Nashville on Wednesday. I poked around and eventually decided to spend Monday night at Reunion Tower. You can go to the bar for free or the observation deck for \$16. Guess where I ended up?

I walked there, it was about a mile and a half from where I was staying, through some rapidly gentrifying areas. Which, in Dallas, meant that I saw two other pedestrians the whole way. It was a bit eerie. I followed my usual plan for walking a mile or two away: I looked at a map, figured out how to get pretty close, and figured I'd just find my way from there. I was headed towards a 500' tower after all, it shouldn't that hard.

The problem ended up being not which way to go, but how to get there. Because Dallas is apparently built by large white people made rich on fossil fuels; it's totally a driving city. I wasn't in the center of downtown, and I'm sure it's better there, but the streets were full of cars and the sidewalks empty. My path took me in a maze of tunnels underneath the convention center, and then I ended up literally on the wrong side of the tracks from where I needed to be. I could see Reunion Tower, but 20' high fences with razor wire on either side of the railroad tracks separated me from where I needed to be. I found a decrepit concrete staircase, covered in sleeping bags and cardboard, behind a parking lot where folks were idling and performing trades through car windows. I walked up the steps to find a raised highway, multiple lanes of high speed cars and a narrow sidewalk. The raised road took me across the train tracks, and there was a set of stairs down, but they were on the other side of the highway with no way to cross. I waited for a while until there was enough of a lull to dash across, and then it was down another set of lonely steps and out into an open grass area where I took the photo up top. Other than the folks milling around the parking lot, I'd seen almost no one besides those behind windshields.

I walked to the tower, and headed up as the bar opened. The clouds were thickening and there was a bit of rain, but it was still pleasant to watch the city drift by below. Traffic look snarled in all directions, and the bartenders confirmed that was normal in Dallas. I had a great time, it was a Monday night so there were other customers but it was slow enough the bartenders had time to talk as they worked. The food was good, they were barrel aging negronis (not my favorite but I always try them), and were curious about my trip and happy to talk about life in Dallas.

After relaxing for a couple of hours I took my leave and walked back, this time even more alone. I'd figured out a more direct route back, and wandered through the tunnels under the convention center, this time the only person on foot for the entire trip home.



*No graffiti in the tunnels; that would require people.*

Tuesday I worked during the day and then hopped on the scooter. I left before rush hour and the roads were busy, and slow at times, but passable. The road eventually plows straight through the middle of the giant Lake Ray Hubbard, which was fun. The temperature slowly started to drop and the sun went down. My plan was to cross the border and make it at least to Texarkana. As I hit the outskirts I was feeling good and figured I had a couple more hours of driving in me. Anne Elisabeth had noted that Arkadelphia (town slogan: "It's a great place to call home!") was further along; apparently Arkansas is big on borrowing names from elsewhere and then cleverly merging them with its own. Sure enough, I stopped in Arkadelphia, in a roadside motel hearing the trucks whiz by. I don't know if that part of the country normally has so much truck traffic or if it was the holidays, but there were noticeably more semi's on the road than I'd seen on the rest of the trip.



Wednesday I woke up, put on a lot of layers, and headed out into an overcast, cool day. I was starting to see forests beside me, it felt very much like returning to the Midwest even though I was south of Little Rock. I stopped for lunch in Memphis, although I ended up being out in the burbs a bit as I'd looked up a well regarded vegan restaurant. The food was fine and the hour in the warmth was wonderful. I only saw two other motorcyclists on the road that day; both in full heavy gear and gesticulating wildly when they saw me. Winter riders are a strange bunch.

Once again the sun was setting as I pulled into my destination outside of Nashville. My friend Anne Elisabeth had "volunteered" (aka: hadn't come up with an excuse fast enough when I said I was heading into town) to put me up for a couple of nights. It was a lovely visit before my final push to Ohio.



*Scooter by the warmest home in Nashville.*