

LOG MATH: 4 + 2 = One*

*Four Guys plus Two Cars equals One Great Adventure

After the Saturday Banquet at LOG 30 in Gettysburg my fine English friend Rod Thonger observed, “If I had known about this ‘Liar’s Essay’ contest I would have submitted this story: On a whim, four guys, two of them quite large and all of them old, decide to drive two small Lotus cars, a 1968 Lotus Seven and a 1965 Lotus Elan, packed with all the gear four guys need to support 8 days on the road and 4 days at a LOG, across highway US 50 to the Atlantic Ocean and on to Gettysburg. They will have a schedule that requires them to make eight lodging waypoints and will make every one exactly as planned.



They will not experience any tribulation through rain, wind or record heat in Kansas and record cold in Cincinnati. They will do 2,345 trouble free miles to LOG as if they were driving new Toyotas. Now there is a winning Liar’s Essay!”

The only problem: It’s not a lie! That is exactly what we did. Well maybe not exactly, but we made it substantially intact and without any problem that either stopped or materially delayed us. After some careful pre-trip work on the cars by my Yorkshire friends Geoff and Brian, (whose garage is somewhat cheekily referred to as the Lincoln Lotus Centre, [the LLC]) our first day began with a great drive down Highway 105 to Monument and breakfast at Village Inn. Only one hour on the road and we had already stopped to eat. Then we stopped again near Rocky Ford, world famous for melons, at Mary’s Melons, a roadside produce stand. As advertised, hers were the biggest and juiciest melons around.



Bent’s Old Fort was a revelation to the Brits. The real Old West was brought to life rather than the Hollywood version exported to the world. We got a personalized tour of about two hours covering everything from food to supplies to trades and tourists. We got in free thanks to the old geezer (that would be me) and his Golden Eagle Pass. Driving through eastern CO was very hot. We learned later that a new record temp for the date had been set in Garden City - 96 degrees.

As we approached Garden City, I remarked that if I had been charged with naming this town, and had at my disposal a full dictionary, the word Garden would never have occurred to me. Farmers were burning their corn and wheat stubble resulting in a smoky haze over the entire town. Until I learned the source I was worried that it was our two Lotus cars that were responsible. Actually, the cars used only a small bit of oil; the Elan averaged about 30 mpg and the Seven about 32. Both ran perfectly.

The next day we got an early start with plans to stop in Dodge City for breakfast. Driving into the rising sun was a challenge and it was a quite brisk temperature, but by the time we got to Dodge it was perfect. The Brits wanted to see Boot Hill, a tourist trap re-creation of the old front street of Dodge City, but a pretty well done version. We spent two and a half hours there which meant that with our breakfast we had consumed three and a half hours in Dodge. Another slow start. Do you see a pattern forming here?



As we left the city I noticed an auto dealer purveying Chrysler products including Dodge and wondered out loud: “If his ethics were questionable, would he be a Dodgy, Dodge, Dodge dealer?” Driving through Kansas provided a phenomenon I had not ever before seen; the ability to catch a few winks of sleep while driving. Brian was at the wheel of the Elan as we proceeded east across miles and miles of dead straight road and his relaxed posture and fixed gaze as we rolled on and on led me to believe I was not the only one napping. I looked on the map and warned him of a pair of turns coming up in five miles or so, feeling the whole time that I had stolen precious moments of sleep from him.

At last the turns came, a 45 degree left followed by a 45 degree right only a couple of miles later.

Finally, exciting Lotus type of roads in Kansas.

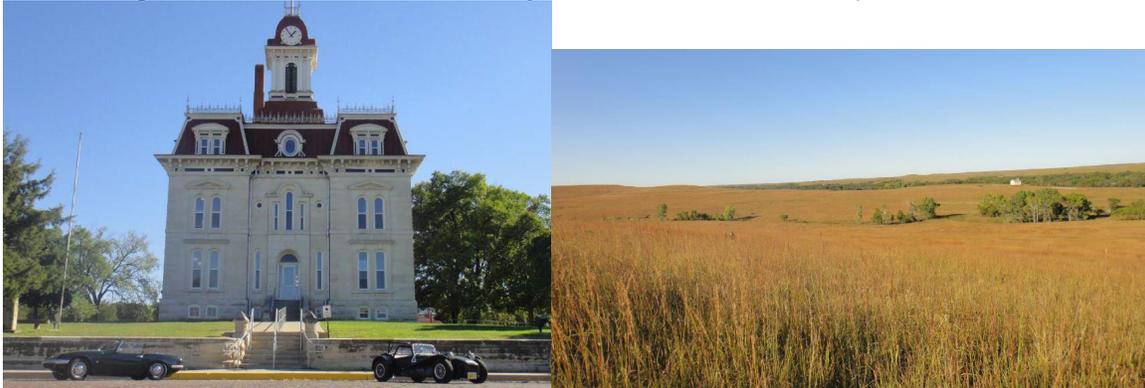
But there was more:

We encountered a grade which lifted us to a height that we could see for miles in any direction as though



we had reached the summit of a major mountain. Not being familiar with the names of Kansas topography, I enquired at our next stop what it was called. I was informed it is called, in Kansas, an overpass.

Because we had spent so much time in Dodge, we passed up the Kansas Cosmosphere and Space Center and proceeded via a stop in the lovely little town of Cottonwood Falls, to the Tallgrass Prairie where we arrived just as it closed for the day.



Well, the visitor center might not be open, but the tall grass has no open hours so we took the 1.5 mile walking trail and experienced the immensity of the prairie of a century ago. The wind and the waving grass, the hills and the shifting light that interplayed gave me a sense of what the settlers experienced. The grass was so tall Geoff couldn't be seen in the photo. Then we remembered he was taking the pictures. We got to our hotel in Council Grove, KS and after bathing the prairie off, went to dinner at the historic Hays House, a major supplier and rest stop for those headed west on the Oregon or Santa Fe trail in the early 1800's. We had a great meal and then a detailed personal tour of all three levels of the famed old place by Dan the manager. Lots of human drama within these walls. Neat.

Upon rising and getting ready to leave Friday morning, Geoff gave us the news that Brian had been sick all night and needed medical attention. Fortunately there is a hospital in Council Grove and they determined that he was suffering from acid reflux and not heart problems after finding a normal EKG and blood test. Feeling a bit better but still rocky, Brian manned up and we headed east after picking up Rod's laundry from Silvia at the town Laundromat who had done it when we were getting Brian treatment. I believe they call that multi-tasking. Rod later found that Sylvia cost him one sock.

On the road again, as Willie Nelson would say. With a multi hour delay, we drove with intent the rest of the day and bypassed the Mighty Melt Sandwich & Spud Shop in Sedalia, MO. While in the cars we ate the junk food that we picked up at fuel stops focused on our target destination of Gray Summit, Mo. When we asked for a dinner recommendation, we not only got a great restaurant but a perfect Lotus road to get there. It was six miles of twisty, dippy-doodle, and blind crests through the woods at dusk. Our euphoria was in direct proportion to the boredom experienced in the flat expanse of Kansas and Missouri of the past two days because we also had found a great meal.

On Saturday, we awoke to a light rain. That is no problem in the ostensibly weather tight Elan, but presents some difficulty with the Seven having no top or functioning wiper motor. Our fearless LLC lads Brian and Geoff didn't hesitate to jump in and go on the Interstate to downtown St. Louis and the Gateway Arch. I had booked tickets months before so we were able to proceed right to the fascinating elevators that ratchet up the

changing angle of the arch as it rises.



Quite a view from the top which we enjoyed for about 20 minutes then began looking for one another to go down. Rod, Brian and I found each other readily but there was no Geoff. Now the observation deck of the Arch is only about 50 feet by 12 feet so the only conclusion was that he had gone down already. So that's what we did. Looking for him around the base of the Arch was harder as there is a wonderful museum and lots of displays and other hiding places. We stationed one person at the central information desk and sent scouts to various parts of the monument to find him. Nothing. Finally, I went up the ramp to the glass doors where I could get cell phone reception and found a voice mail from Geoff that he was already with the cars in the parking garage. After reuniting there, I asked why he had gone down ahead of us. He replied, "I couldn't find any of you up there so I thought you'd gone on down"

Getting out of St. Louis on the tangle of intersecting Interstates was tough and we took the wrong exit headed toward Chicago. After a GPS correction and a Walmart stop for gloves, rain gear and a hat for Rod (it was getting pretty cold and damp) we took a nice twisty back road to find US 50 east of O'Fallon, IL. The weather cleared a bit although it didn't warm up much, and we made good time across Illinois and through Indiana. The sad thing was the LLC lads were still in the Seven and missed my stirring rendition of "Back Home Again in Indiana" across the Wabash River. Lucky Rod got to hear it.

I hadn't made reservations for a Bedford Indiana motel, our planned stopping point, as there were lots of them and I still had that nagging doubt that we would make the targeted stop that far along the route. Silly me. The cars were running flawlessly. So we found that there were only a few rooms left in the town due to an Indiana University homecoming football game in Bloomington fifty miles away and the overflow crowds had taken almost all the rooms in Bedford. Our last resort, certainly no pun there, was the Super 8 at \$125 per room. Plus tax. Upon departing the next morning I inquired as to the rate the next night; \$65 was the answer. This is an illustration of the law of supply and demand!

Onward to our next stopping point – a rendezvous with Eric for lunch just east of Cincinnati at The Dilly Deli in Mariemont, a charming little town resembling an English village. Both the cars and my friends felt right at home. After a delightful lunch and a swapping of Lotus stories we were on our way east again in a record low maximum temp for the date of 46 degrees, to Marietta, OH just across the river from West Virginia.

What should have been an easy piece of navigation around Athens, OH became a disaster. Due to multiple construction projects and roads redirected, we ended up



circling through the town center of Athens with its abundant stop lights and traffic, and headed the wrong way on highway 33 to reconnect to US 50. Instead we found ourselves way south of where we intended to be and had to find a route to get us back on track. That is where we got lucky; we found Ohio route 681. I am trying to find the superlatives to describe it, but can only say "Wow!" A supremely smooth road, devoid of traffic, that dipped and swayed over the Hocking Hills with blind crests and sweeping curves punctuated by an occasional hairpin turn became the favorite of our trip. With Brian leading the way in the Seven driving swiftly yet within the limit of responsibility, I had as much fun in a Lotus as my very best memories from Colorado's famous mountain roads. It was clearly the best road of the trip we all agreed, even including West Virginia's best.

What made it really special, along with the spectacular fall foliage colors, was that we shared it after a disappointment of navigation. That made the high just a bit higher and we arrived in Marietta full of good cheer with anticipation of tomorrow's roads through West Virginia.

Day six dawned with a light rain and gloomy overcast. We packed up under the hotel portico to stay dry and by the time we were ready to depart, the rain had ceased. Heading over the Ohio River on the old St. Mary's bridge we got stuck behind a couple of very slow trucks grinding up the steep grade - so much for fun on the twisting roads. After a long stretch of double yellow lines (it seemed like 20 miles but was really probably half that) we finally got a chance to pass and began driving in a Lotus manner. Onward through the hills on a divided US 50, we were making good time when the rain began again. We ducked off the big slab into the town of Salem for coffee, shelter and Rain-X. We found all three plus fuel at a very friendly convenience store. The magic properties of the Rain-X were revealed to us when, after a thorough application, we found the visibility through windscreen of the Seven to be much improved. It improved mostly because it never rained again all the way to Gettysburg!

Our rate of progress was slow but the grin factor was high as we proceeded up and down 9% grades repeatedly on our way to lunch at the Hilltop Café just east of Romney. We stopped there because it not only looked like a good local eatery, but it had a NAPA parts store next door. After a warm and filling soup/sandwich combo, we were planning to fill the gearbox oil on the Elan. After asking at three places to use a lift, we resorted to the old reliable method of one set of wheels on the curb and a bit of help from the jack. Our capable pit and gutter man, Geoff, crawled under the car while Brian and I poured the quart bottle of 90 weight gear oil into a clear tube much like an automotive IV drip. Our man Rod, meanwhile, was reaching a very skeptical risk assessment of the whole process.

After more than a quart addition to a 2 pint capacity gearbox (yes you read right) we charged off to our target of Arlington, VA for the night. Passing some beautiful horses and their ranches, we arrived at suburbia just at rush hour. After hitting a dozen or so red lights in a row, we pulled off to have a pint or two and let things clear. The only trouble was when we were ready to do the final bit, the night was completely dark and we were lit. We made it to the hotel just fine only to be joined by several bus loads of teen agers on a visit to the nation's capital. Fortunately we checked in just ahead of them but come morning we ran the gauntlet of texting, oblivious teens to reach our Lotus escape pods.

We sped pleasantly along a parkway that lulled us into a false sense of coping with the maelstrom that is Washington traffic. Soon we were dead stopped for a road repair that funneled three lanes into one controlled by a short green/long red signal and we sat more than we crept. Of course the puny original equipment fan on the Seven failed to cool adequately despite the 60 degree ambient so we were forced to pull off to the side and wait for it to cool. What should have taken minutes took us an hour so when we finally got going, we only stopped briefly along the National Mall which US 50 runs along side as Constitution Avenue. Feeling very conspicuous because folks shouted and gawked at every intersection, we were especially taken by an invitation from a couple of DC “professional” women in a Cadillac, with hair color never found in nature, who cooed “Thas’ the cutest lil’ car I ever did see! You wan’ show it to me?” Uh...No. Onward we went after waving to the President as we passed the White House (Geoff is certain he saw a return wave) to meet with Dan Collins in Annapolis for lunch. One of the cool things about the plans for this trip was the response from Eric and Dan to meet up with us along the way. We had a delightful lunch near the waterfront in Eastport, a bay-front district of Annapolis, at the Boatyard Bar and Grill. Fabulous crab cakes! Both the cars were still running flawlessly and the weather was great. It looked as though we would make our goal of seeing the Atlantic Ocean by sundown a reality.



The eastern shore of Maryland is intricately meandering at the waters edge, but US 50 goes more or less straight through the flat, featureless fields between the bay and the ocean. Thus our progress was quick and it wasn’t long before I figured we were closing in on our goal. I held five fingers up in the air for the five remaining miles as a signal to the lads behind. Then I changed to four, three, two and one as we approached the beach at Ocean City. As we pulled into the parking lot with the big, arching sign over the board walk, I felt proud we had made it. I gave Rod a high five in the Elan, turned to the lads in the Seven, whooped and said that the spirit of Colin Chapman must have been with us as we had made it to the finish line. This belief was proved true when I opened the door to get out and the door fell right off. Of Course. True to Colin’s mantra of making the thing only strong enough to do the job and no more, we had, after all, *crossed* the finish line.



Naturally we spent several hours walking the boardwalk along the beach and marveling at the tackiness that is the Ocean City beachfront, and having a beer and mozzarella sticks at one of the few places not boarded up, as the season was clearly over here. That night we repaired the door hinge, the mirror and tended to the transmission and engine oil in a lighted, covered parking area at the hotel. The opposite side of the supply and demand of Bedford was evident here with thousands of empty rooms available and we enjoyed the best hotel bargain of the trip plus a fine bargain meal at Finnegan's the attached Irish pub.

I mentioned that we had crossed the finish line. Not quite. While we had put our focus on making it to the ocean, we still had to get to Gettysburg. This was a portion of the trip on which I had not spent much time route planning other than getting us over the top of the Chesapeake Bay via route 1. Leaving it to the GPS system Rod was using, we weaved a quite tangled web of roads around the University of Delaware in Newark, doubling back several times. Once clear of Newark, we crossed into what we thought was Pennsylvania but must have been England because we encountered the towns of Nottingham and Oxford and roads like Little Britain and Kings Pen. Just as we stopped for a bit of lunch at Pasquale's Pizza we saw the first Amish horse and buggy of the trip. Cameras clicked and fingers were pointed. It was like a time warp back to Jolly Old England indeed!



A few hours later we were in Gettysburg and the Eisenhower Hotel alone and the only Lotus cars around but for a lone Esprit. The hotel complex was like a ghost town as we were a day early as we decided to take a day and work on the cars after arrival but before the hordes arrived. As the only inhabitants of the bar, we toasted each other for the successful arrival and the relatively painless trip that none of us secretly believed would be trouble-free, though this was never mentioned aloud by any of us. Actually, contrary to complaint about trouble, the talk in the bar was of doing another long trip. There was even talk about returning to Denver with me and rescheduling the flight to England as the trip had been so smooth and Toyota like. No lie!