

## Introduction

In this age information is literally at our fingertips. Some of you will check the weather this week on a PDA when you sense leaves rustling from an approaching front. In the past few months the number of television stations that I receive, sans cable, have doubled. On one of those stations, I watched County Commissioners discuss their plans, such as Tim Brown of Wood County who mentioned the windmill farm. As I am writing this, news bytes are displayed on the monitor. My collection of local history books with their colorful spines now seems more quaint than relevant. I don't seek this level of information so if you do, you are better informed than I am.

With that in mind, I wondered how best to relay descriptive information about this year's GOBA route. Many of you are loyal riders and you've been to Defiance, Bowling Green and Port Clinton, etc. Plus, this area is most remarkable for its lack of biological, visual and architectural diversity.

When I went to pick up the route maps for this year's GOBA and to get words of wisdom from Julie for the Digest I was pretty nervous.

I whined, half joking, like I always do, "*Can't I turn it into a novel this year?*"

Usually I am met with a well reasoned, "*No.*"

However, this year Julie responded with an unexpected, "*What are you thinking of?*"

I took that as a "*Yes,*" and figured that I'd much rather beg forgiveness rather than permission.

So, I am begging your forgiveness for not putting together a linear guide to this year's route, but visualizing it more as Sonnie might have experienced it.

Sonnie's grandparents, Henry and Ethyl, who are successful and wise, are being left behind by these rapid technological changes. I can picture Henry working on a crossword puzzle and able to fill in the answer to: "Part of AD" but not the answer to: "Portable PCs."

Sonnie's parents' generation, Willy, Garth and Rick, are hard working and well-meaning, but are lost between a desire for the romance of the past and their need to live in the present. They compromise their dreams just to eke out a living.

Sonnie and Annie though, are the most informed generation yet and grew up with rapid-fire technological advances as normal. They are self-confident. Annie has control over her classes but her mother would be shocked with the tricks that students pull. Sonnie is an avid skateboarder,

BMXer, snowboarder and disc golfer even though his parents never did those things.

The landscape on this year's route is very, very level. I tried to think of any hills. There are some slight rises away from the Maumee River, and maybe we cross over a railroad in Bellevue on a bridge, and the route crosses over I-90.

Of course, the flatness is a result of glaciations thousands of years ago. Essentially Lake Erie extended down into this area as a low lying and extremely dense swamp, known as the Great Black Swamp. Glaciation and Lake Erie left behind some ridges. These became the area's first Native American trails and later, roadbeds.

As a last resort, Native Americans were treated into this area, because it was the least attractive land left. Then they were treated out after the Battle of Fallen Timbers. White settlers moved in. Land was either given away to the "sufferers" from Connecticut or was sold to emigrants who had few resources.

Travel through the Great Black Swamp was unbelievably difficult and slow. Sometimes people had to wait for winter and the ground to freeze before they could traverse this area with heavy wagons. During the War of 1812, inroads were made and forts were built. The soldiers became ill and many of them died of malaria, spread by female mosquitoes. Following that was a cholera epidemic. Cholera is a bacterial infectious disease that lives in aquatic environments. George Croghan, who distinguished himself at Fort Stephenson, now Fremont, during the War of 1812 died of cholera in 1849.

Different forms of drainage were tried and were of little success until clay tile was developed. James Hill of Fremont worked as a drainage tiler in the 1870s and the 1880s, during which time he devised a machine that he named the Buckeye Traction Ditcher. The Buckeye allowed for the quick placement of drainage tiles. After the Great Black Swamp was drained, the Buckeye Traction Ditcher went on to drain large parts of Florida and Louisiana.

Between local information volunteers who will greet you in the GOBA information tent and GOBA newsletters, you are well-equipped to enjoy GOBA to its fullest. The last thing that I need to do is to try and define your experience. It is an adventure after all.

Chances are good that you will profit from this year's GOBA just as much as Sonnie did while working his census job, by lingering awhile and by tasting what each community has to offer.

Wishing you rain only at night and tailwinds.

*Julia Schmitt*

## **Adventures With Sonnie**

Sonnie is young and Sonnie loves things; he loves to own the latest technology. He welcomes change so he can justify buying new things to manage the change. When gasoline reached \$4 per gallon, he bought a scooter from the Vespa Scooter dealer in Norwalk. However, Sonnie loves Annie more than his things and in order to buy her a decent wedding ring, he's been selling some of his possessions. His parents, unfortunately, aren't of any help to him. So, besides selling his things, he needs to find another source of income so he can present Annie with a ring that shows that he has the capacity to provide for her.

His parents are divorced and his father, Rick, while talented with his hands, tends to roam the country working odd jobs. Right now he is in Albuquerque detailing commercial trucks. Sonnie suspects that he is living out of his pickup truck at one of those truck stops that have the amenities of a small community.

His mother, Wilhemina, Willy, lives with Garth, her boyfriend, in Grand Rapids, Ohio. Willy works wherever she can in the various shops around the quaint town and cooks at the 1883 Italianate Housely House B&B whenever the Williams host an event there. She sometimes resents that she is working while others are at the B&B enjoying themselves but at the end of the day she appreciates the ambience of the Victorian home and its location above the Maumee River. Willy keeps busy in the summer, but as soon as winter hits, the town has but a few hardy souls and not much business. Annually Willy and Garth's finances are stretched to the breaking point when the Maumee freezes over.

She and Garth are both dreamers and romanticizers of the past. Garth receives a stipend for working as a blacksmith at the Isaac Ludwig Mill located opposite Grand Rapids. Sometimes when he is eating his lunch on the mill's porch overlooking the river, he sees a bald eagle fly by. He and Willy enjoy making buckwheat pancakes made from flour milled at the Ludwig Mill. Garth is a common sight in town, a gray-haired guy in flannel shirt and jeans (in all kinds of weather) riding his vintage bicycle that he got from Memory Lane Classics on Third Street on the edge of Grand Rapids. His bike isn't fast so he has to be especially careful while crossing the bridge to the mill. If he can get a ride there, he will gladly take it. Garth also hangs out at Memory Lane where they restore vintage bicycles and where they eschew road riders who ride bikes without kickstands and then lean them up against cars, motorcycles and just about anywhere.

Sonnie, though, has an anchor in his father's parents, Henry and Ethyl. Long ago they opened their home and their refrigerator to him.

Ethyl works part time at the Norwalk Furniture Corporation in Norwalk where she started as an upholsterer. In 2008, there was a setback when the company, begun in 1902, filed for bankruptcy. Ethyl was out of a job for about a year and because of that, was unable to help Sonnie with buying a ring for Annie. Then a consortium of twelve Norwalk families pooled their resources and got the company up and running again, but at a reduced capacity. They went from having 400-500 employees to around 100. Ethyl, who was not quite ready to retire, gladly took the front desk job where she didn't have to work her arthritic hands so much. She was already familiar with their distributors and suppliers, such as the lumber mill in Tennessee that ships wood to them.

Following the Korean War, Ethyl and Henry were newlyweds and had set up housekeeping on a farm near Norwalk where they grew a variety of vegetables and had a bit of livestock and Ethyl raised chickens.

In the early years, a springtime chore was shoveling cow manure onto the manure spreader and then spreading it over the fields. The fields were fertilized and the barn was cleaned out at the same time. By the time Sonnie was born, in 1988, Henry had already seen many changes in farming practices in northwest Ohio. By the 1970s the tomato and sugar beet crops had moved to the Fremont area. Other vegetables such as radishes, broccoli and lettuce were long gone and had been replaced with seemingly endless fields of corn, soybeans and wheat. All of the corn he planted were hybrids, such as those produced by seed companies like Dekalb, Pfister, Pioneer and Funk. Sonnie was just a baby when Henry sold his cows to a large dairy in Hoytville in Wood County so he didn't remember them, their mooing or their grassy breath. Nor was he aware that there had been fencerows that teemed with migrating birds in spring and fall and rabbits that helped themselves to his Grandmother's garden.

Today they no longer live on the farm giving it and the hard physical labor it required, up for a cute house in Elmore.

Ethyl had grown up on a farm where she helped her mother raise a flock of around 200 chickens for a little extra income. Her mother sold or traded the eggs with a local grocer or a traveling huckster who came by weekly in his wagon. Sometimes she went to Pemberville and picked up shoes, fabrics and whatever else she needed at Beeker's General Store. Even Sonnie gets the charm of the store with its old clock on the wall, the creaky wood floors and the worn step out front.

Ethyl's mother always had eggs for frying, poaching and boiling and for using in other dishes as well as for baking. Occasionally the chicken itself ended up on the dinner table.

Ethyl's father took the doomed chicken to the chopping block and with a swift and sure swing, cut the chicken's head off. Ethyl knew her father liked the chickens and she could never understand how he could do that. Her mother would follow with a bucket of boiling water and plunge the carcass into it to help loosen the feathers. After plucking what she could, she would wave a lighted piece of crumpled newspaper over the nearly naked chicken to singe off the remaining pinfeathers.

In Ethyl's memory were the mixed feelings about her father killing the chickens, but providing for his family in especially lean times and the wonderful fried chicken dinners that her mother cooked. The spring chickens were the best and they were always enjoyed with homegrown and home-canned produce.

During Ethyl's childhood, rural free delivery came to her home in the country and her mother could mail order chicks. This allowed her to try out different breeds. She even got Americanas, who laid eggs with green shells. To this day Ethyl apologizes to her mother's memory every time she purchases a polystyrene foam egg carton with graded and sized eggs in the super market.

Annie is working on her Master's Degree in Education at Defiance College in Defiance. She likes the small school and its involvement in social issues locally and nationally. She and a group of fellow education students went to New Orleans following Katrina where they helped by teaching students in makeshift schools. It is interesting to Annie that Sonnie's parents both display no interest in religion nor do they have any interest in social issues but Sonnie does.

His life growing up in Norwalk was tumultuous with his parents warring over big things like borrowing money and little things like which drawer to put the potholders in. She figures that the church offers some structure and sanctity for him.

In 1873 in Norwalk there was held what is known as "The Great Revival." Prayer meetings were held all day in churches, private homes and in other places all over town. The charismatic Reverend Horatio Wells traveled from his home in Cincinnati to Norwalk to kick off and lead the revival.

Special prayer meetings were held in private homes for the benefit of some members of the family for whom other family members were

concerned. Prayers were often given for an “ungodly companion” or parents prayed for their children and children prayed for their parents. Leaders of these meetings received numerous written requests for prayers from those with “burdened hearts.” Many of the prayer meetings were held for the purpose of conversions. There were meetings set up specifically for children, as well.

The Great Revival of 1873 began in November and by the fourth week, the Presbyterian Church that could seat 1,000 persons was still filled to capacity. By the fifth, sixth and seventh weeks attendance began to drop off, as people had to get back to farming. The Great Revival of Norwalk actually went on for a total of thirteen weeks.

While Norwalk never hosted another event of this magnitude, people continue to meet. Sonnie’s church is one that hosts meetings in people’s homes and that is where he met Annie and his other friends who share his interest in snowboarding, skateboarding, disc golf and BMX riding.

A member of his church recommended Sonnie for a job at the Excel Bike Shop in Norwalk. Sonnie does well there as a salesman because he assumes that everyone else has the same love of stuff that he does. His only downfall is being his own best customer.

Sonnie, Annie, and their friends sometimes hang out at the Cabin Fever Coffee Shop on Clinton Street in Defiance. Annie likes their sweet treats and even though she isn’t rail thin, she has no interest in changing. Annie is singularly self-confident and that characteristic helps her maintain order in any classroom.

Henry and Ethyl sold their farm a few years back, as Henry didn’t want to face another flat tractor tire. They made the move to Elmore where they walk to the library and to the post office. They go to Woodville for grocery shopping. If they want farm fresh beef, they make a trip up to Port Clinton and stop at a farm along the way where the farmer keeps meat in a freezer by the side of the road and they pay on the honor system. Henry likes to fish for Walleye in Lake Erie. When Sonnie was young they would bring him and a few of his friends up to Cedar Point each summer for a day.

Ethyl still desires to get dirt under her fingernails and one day a week, during the growing season, she makes the short drive to Schedel Arboretum from Elmore. She volunteers there pulling weeds and planting and chatting with the other volunteers. She likes everything about it: the Japanese garden, the waterfall, the sculptures set around the

gardens and the fact that she can enjoy the company of others after spending all of those years growing up on a farm and then raising her family on one.

Some springs, with the thaw and heavy rains, the roads become impassably flooded. Ethyl and her family would be marooned for a few days. Not that anything bad ever happened, it was more the feeling of not being able to get out that bothered her. Sometimes their plans were ruined.

In the cozy Red, White and Brew coffee shop, in Elmore, Ethyl had heard rumors that Joseph Schedel had acted in the interest of the Nazi party during World War II. Well, she didn't know about that, but she did know that Joseph had come from Germany shortly before World War I. She assumes that the Schedels must have kept to themselves, thus inviting suspicion.

This area is a great source for limestone and limestone products, such as gypsum board. Joseph Schedel founded the Dolite Company that produced dead-burned dolomite for the steel industry. He sold Dolite to the Pfizer Company in 1965. Shortly after that, Joseph and his wife, Marie started the foundation to look after the arboretum.

The Schedels had traveled extensively and brought plants home with them and with expert advice, started the arboretum. They had bought the brick Victorian house that now serves as the offices for the Arboretum in 1929.

Ethyl wondered if Sonnie and Annie would like to have their wedding at the Arboretum, but she was smart enough to not say anything yet.

She didn't understand the expense and elaborate plans that young people went through today to get married, but Sonnie was their only grandchild and she was excited for him. She and Henry had had a simple wedding at his parent's home in Defiance. The home was in an ideal location though, situated as it was across the street from the beautiful Defiance Library, built of variegated sandstone quarried from the Mansfield area. The library also sits on the former site of Fort Defiance that overlooks the confluence of the Maumee and Auglaize Rivers, a spot also subject to flooding. Henry told her about helping to carry books from the library's basement to the first floor to protect them from floodwaters.

Henry, his sister, Peg, and their friends, enjoyed searching the old, abandoned farmsteads around Defiance; especially where James Shirley, an early settler lived in a log cabin and where the Indians had a village on the north side of the Auglaize River. The kids found old bits of brick, dish fragments, earthenware and glass, probably left in the refuse site by

the old Shirley cabin. Henry once found a silver thimble, perhaps an Indian trade item from the old Evans Trading Post that was across the river. The kids played "James Shirley and the Indians." Folklore had it that Shirley was a rigorous man and that the Indians were afraid of him. One time a neighbor of the Shirleys' was walking home through the woods and two Indians captured her. Big Jim Shirley heard her scream and when he confronted the Indians, they ran away.

Sometime later, Henry visited Jim Shirley's grave and he found where animals had dug the earth around it and appropriately an arrowhead lay atop the grave.

Peg worked for years at the G.C. Murphy Company in Defiance where she tried on all of the latest fashions. After Henry got portly on Ethyl's good cooking, Peg recruited him to be the store's Santa Claus each year after that for 40 years. His ruddy complexion from spending so much time outside meant that he didn't require any makeup and that was just fine with Henry.

In the Elmore Library Ethyl was totally stunned to see the book, "*The Prizewinner of Defiance, Ohio: How My Mother Raised 10 Children on 25 Words or Less*" by Terry "Tuff" Ryan. Why, she had known "Tuff's" older brothers, not well, they were younger than she was. The family, like most families of that time, was poor and they kept to themselves. Plus with 10 children, there must have been someone to play with all of the time.

Ethyl read the book in two days not wanting to put it down and was a bit snippy with Henry when he interrupted her because he wanted some dinner. Henry forgave her when he found out what she was reading. He was familiar with the landmarks mentioned in the book: the Catholic school that the Ryans attended, their home and the post office where they mailed their Mother's winning entries that managed to keep the family afloat. He even knew the mailman who walked so achingly slow.

"*The Prizewinner of Defiance, Ohio,*" a movie based on the book came out in 2005 and there was a special screening of it shown in town. Henry and Ethyl went to see it and thought that it was a fine depiction of small town life in the 1950s. However, Ethyl was surprised that the father played such a prominent role in the movie. In the book, Ethyl felt that the father's psychological and physical absences and the mother's success in overcoming them were at the core of the story. Sonnie has since watched the movie on their DVD player, even though it is not his kind of movie, (he's a *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* kind of guy.) Ethyl is always pleased when he comes around to work the remote for her. She can do it, but it makes her nervous. Silly, she knows. Plus,

Sonnie is familiar with the main actors in the story, Julianne Moore and Woody Harrelson, and can talk at length about other movies and television programs that they have been in.

Even though he retired from farming, Henry still attends the Farm Field Day held annually at the Agricultural Research Station on Range Line Road north of Hoytville. He'd had to change farming practices over the years and here he'd gather with other farmers to learn about such things as fertilizer rates to use on the heavy, silty clay soils in this area. They instituted no-till farming early on at this research station. More recently they are again using cow manure to enrich the soil, getting it from the nearby mega-dairy.

Whenever he attends Farm Field Day, Henry stops in Holgate for a cup of coffee at Peterson's. Entering the village, he crosses Joe E. Brown Avenue. It brings to mind a special day, in 1949, when native son, Joe E. Brown, came to town and was honored by 10,000 people, including war heroes and celebrities. Major General Beightler, commander of the U.S. Army's Thirty-Seventh Infantry Division in the South Pacific, was there. During World War II, Joe had entertained the Thirty-Seventh Division's troops on the front lines. Joe was a pioneer in the field of entertaining troops in WWII, flying 200,000 miles to make 742 appearances.

After the parade through Holgate, they gathered at the high school stadium where it was dedicated as the Joe E. Brown Stadium. Both the major and minor league baseball commissioners were there as Joe was an avid baseball player. Even while he was in Hollywood, he owned and ran the best team there.

Unless they lived under a rock or in some isolated area, every American in Henry's generation knew of Joe E. Brown.

When Joe was nine years old his parents signed a contract allowing him to join the circus as an acrobat. After his mother learned that his trainer believed in corporal punishment as a learning tool, she took him out of the circus. Joe E. Brown then went to New York where he played baseball in the minor leagues starting at the age of 13.

After joining another acrobatic team, someone suggested that Joe should be a comedian so he took comedy up as well. For years he and Ted Lewis, from Circleville, toured together. Joe E. Brown also became a well-known stage actor and a movie star.

The same year that Joe E. Brown visited Holgate, he was touring the world playing Elwood Dowd, the slightly deranged character in the play, *Harvey*. Joe was disappointed to not get the part of Elwood in the movie

version of *Harvey*. It went to Jimmy Stewart because of Stewart's box office appeal at that time.

One of Joe's last stage appearances was as Elwood in *Harvey* in 1960 put on at Bowling Green State University during the dedication ceremonies of the Joe E. Brown Theatre. Leaving home at such an early age meant that Joe E. Brown had almost no formal education and so he adopted Bowling Green when they honored him with a Doctor of Humane Letters degree. After his performance as Elwood, he donated his suit and a formal portrait of him with "Harvey."

Henry and Ethyl didn't see the play, as they were busy with their family and the farm. They noted his passing though in 1973 and whenever they saw him in an old movie such as, *Some Like it Hot*, they recalled his special brand of tasteful humor, his expressive face, his athletic ability and his sunny outlook on life.

Stephano, Sonnie's friend from disc golf, is a descendent of Italians who moved to Fremont to work in the quarries there. Stephano knew of Sonnie's need for money to buy a wedding ring for Annie and so he suggested that Sonnie apply for a temporary job with the U.S. Census Bureau. The Bureau was looking for someone to handle more extensive interviews with select people in the rural areas in northwest Ohio south of Toledo. They needed someone who was comfortable using a laptop computer, the Ethernet if needed, a PDA and a digital camera.

The Regional Census Center in Chicago set up a local Census Office in Fostoria to collect social, economic and geographic data. With digital photography so prevalent and publishable, the Bureau set out to better document the state of this area, along with other parts of the country. Sonnie applied online for the job.

Sonnie heard back from the Bureau and went to Fostoria for the interview. When he got there, he learned that he would be doing follow up visits to people who hadn't sent in their American Community Surveys. These surveys were quite extensive and people who received them were required to fill them out or they were faced with a fine.

After the interview, Sonnie felt confident that he had the job because of his ease with the tools he needed to work with and he was a pretty big guy, due in part to his grandmother's good cooking, so he felt that he wouldn't be put off easily. He texted Annie about having dinner with him at Dell's restaurant in Fostoria as she was student teaching in Bloomdale just west of there. This way he didn't have to bother her and she could read his message when she got a chance. He decided to kill

some time by visiting the Glass Heritage Gallery on N. Main Street in Fostoria.

In the late 1880s to 1920, Fostoria was at the center of glass manufacturing in the United States. Most glass companies started out by making window glass and then moved into making tableware and decorative objects. The discovery of natural gas in Fostoria provided the initial impetus to start factories here. Towns at that time competed heavily to attract manufacturers by offering cheap natural gas, or even it was sometimes provided for free. Glass making takes a lot of energy, along with silica and lime. Two lime quarries in the area provided lime for the glass making. At one time there were thirteen glass companies inside Fostoria's city limits.

The Fostoria Glass Company moved to Moundsville, West Virginia when the cheap supply of natural gas ran low in Fostoria. They moved there to be closer to coal fields that are needed to fuel the furnaces. Fostoria Glass is still in business in Moundsville.

Sonnie actually enjoyed looking at some of the 400 pieces of glassware in the gallery. Glass curator, Walter Criss, was volunteering that day and showed Sonnie around. Through Walter, Sonnie gained a sense of the academics it takes to catalogue and understand such a collection. He learned that members comb estate sales for pieces to add to the collection and even while they are on vacation, will look for items of glassware made in Fostoria.

Sonnie then walked to view Fostoria's Iron Triangle, a unique train intersection where as many as 180 trains a day pass through. Annie called Sonnie back then and she agreed to meet him at Dell's later for dinner.

With his mind free to wander, Sonnie remembered that his parents had officially met south of Fostoria in the summer of 1986 out at the Archer Daniels Midland Company's plant on Route 12.

Rita Rachen was driving home one night from doing an estimate for a curtain installation. She was so stunned to see an image of Jesus and a child walking on water on the side of one of Midland's soybean oil tanks that she nearly ran off of the road. She was afraid to mention it to anyone for fear that they would think that she was crazy. Finally, she confided in her best friend of over 30 years and the friend went out to see and confirmed what Rachel had seen. Then word got out and the soybean tank, at night, became a popular place of pilgrimage. So many people came that night shift employees at Midland had a hard time getting to work. Emergency vehicles also had difficulty getting through the crowds. The happening of people waiting for darkness to fall and the image to

appear even made the national news. Willis Smith, an amateur photographer, began selling photographs of the image for \$2 apiece out of his car even though it was nearly impossible to capture on film. Stores in Fostoria began carrying "I Saw the Image" tee shirts and coffee mugs. For years afterward, Sonnie drank his hot chocolate out of one of those mugs even though the print had worn off in the dishwasher. He thought that it must have been like a party out there.

Rick, his father, had entered the scene out at Midland by driving up in his red Camaro IROC Z28. He came just to hang out. Rick, in his mirrored aviator-style sunglasses, couldn't help but notice Wilhemina. She looked cute in her short-sleeve, ripped sweatshirt that she wore over a miniskirt. Her hair was piled high with mousse. Rick and she got to talking and he bought her an ice cream cone from Willis Smith who was doing a brisk ice cream business out his truck. Willy's friends took off without her (they were intuitive enough to do this) so Rick drove her home and he got her number.

Rick and Willy had a short courtship and were soon married even though Willy had just graduated from high school. When each of them look back on their meeting, they realize that they married too soon and maybe their love was too much like the image on the soy bean tank, too ephemeral and its clarity too subject to where the observer was standing.

The image was created by the combination of the carbon arc lights at night, and the rust and paint on the tank. Because the tank was rusting, Midland announced its plans to paint it. "A Save the Tank" committee formed and Midland was in the midst of a controversy.

However, Findlay fireman, Ricky Sims took matters into his own hands and threw paint-filled balloons at the tank because he was tired of all the traffic. Alcohol may have played a role in the unlocking of any restraint he felt at committing vandalism.

Willy felt her marriage had been obliterated along with the image on the tank. She was pregnant though and she and Rick stayed together until Sonnie was 12 and Rick's wandering ways got the better of him. Sonnie missed his father but not the strife at home. With Annie, he vowed to not repeat his parents' mistakes and he was taking it slower, much slower with her.

Sonnie shrugged his shoulders involuntarily with the memory of his parent's marriage and then Annie pulled up in front of Dell's Restaurant on South Main and Sonnie forgot all about that. Normally he wouldn't have opted to eat out, wishing to save his money for the ring, but he didn't want to raise any suspicions in Annie. Annie was a lively and

talkative girl and Sonnie liked that about her. She was also a good eater and they each followed their roast pork dinners with pieces of carrot cake, thick with cream cheese icing.

Two weeks after his interview, Sonnie received a phone call that the U.S. Census Bureau wanted to hire him for as long as it took to complete the interviews. He was instructed to go to the Norwalk County Courthouse to pick up his instructions and materials for the job.

After he was cleared by security at the courthouse, he went up to the second floor and there he saw a series of framed pictures describing Norwalk's early pioneer days when this area was called the Firelands. Connecticut had ceded some land to the new Federal Government in 1786 but had reserved a strip south of Lake Erie that extended 120 miles west of the Pennsylvania line. This was called the Western Reserve. In the interest of peace, states had ceded their lands to the federal government except Connecticut, that kept this section and Virginia that held onto the Virginia Military lands in the southern half of Ohio.

Even after the Revolutionary War, Britain was reluctant to give up its claim of land in America. Tory raids had burned homes in Connecticut. The "sufferers" of those raids received compensation for their troubles in the form of land granted to them in the "Firelands." Eighteen hundred people received these land grants and the rest of the Western Reserve was sold and the money from the sales was set aside to help support Connecticut schools.

After Sonnie got the materials he was ready to start on his adventure and that is how he looked at it. Even though he was in familiar territory, he was going to see it all from a new perspective by actually interviewing people in their homes.

He pulled away in his old blue sedan that is covered in BMX, snowboard, disk golf and other manufacturer's stickers. He put in an Aerosmith's CD and the first song to play was "*On The Road Again.*"

It was a short trip to Monroeville where he knocked on the door of an 1850s era octagon house. Sonnie was invited inside where he got a lesson in octagon buildings and what life was like in early Monroeville. People who live in octagon houses tend to be individualistic and these people were no exception since they focused their conversation with Sonnie on the history of the town rather than the dire state of satellite auto manufacturing plants all along the Ohio turnpike in northern Ohio.

Settlers moved to be near the sawmill and gristmill here on the Huron River. A major east-west road through Monroeville brought the

development of hotels in town and then the Monroeville and Sandusky City Railroad came through. At first it was a horse-drawn railway. When steam-powered engines came through, passenger service started. People from the surrounding area had to come to Monroeville just to board the train for places like Columbus. Then the electric interurban and three rail lines helped with the town's growth.

During the Civil War, three different military units trained in Monroeville. Most of their camp supplies and some of their harnesses were bought locally making John Hosford an affluent harness maker.

Hosford, a proponent of Orson Fowler's octagon-shaped houses had this house built. Orson Fowler (1809-1887) was an amateur architect, a phrenologist and an author of a number of self-improvement books.

Monroeville had a piano manufacturer up until the time of the Great Depression. Piano salesmen were an enterprising lot. Some would pretend that their wagon was broken down, ask a homeowner if they could store the piano in their parlor and then ride off. When they returned with their "badly needed" wagon parts, they hoped that the homeowner had fallen in love with the piano and would be unwilling to part with it.

After his visit to the Octagon House, Sonnie traveled on to Bellevue where he stopped in at McClain's Restaurant on East Main for a hamburger and fries. From there he called his next appointment, a Mr. Smith, and found out that he needed to meet up with him at the Mad River and Nickel Plate Railroad Museum right there in Bellevue. All he had to do was turn onto Southwest Street where he found the museum next to the RR tracks. Mr. Smith explained that he'd been working so hard at the museum to get it ready for the summer that he'd unfortunately shuffled the census questionnaire under some papers and had forgotten all about it. They sat down in the gift shop between boxes of newly delivered tee shirts and a rack of postcards. Sonnie got all of the information that he needed and then paid his \$7 for admission to tour the museum. Sonnie was a dedicated worker for a guy his age, but he wasn't about to miss out on any fun opportunities either.

After he had climbed in and out of more than 40 cars and engines, he had discovered that railroading had a mystique all its own. He was surprised to learn that it had also been a luxurious form of travel. There had been dishes made especially for the railroads. He went in and out of a couple of cabooses and learned that one used to be behind nearly every train until the early 1980s, before he was born. He saw a dynamometer car that measured the steam engine's performance, but was obsolete now. The volunteers had even moved a Wabash and Lake Erie Curtice Depot to the museum; no wonder Mr. Smith didn't worry about the census

paperwork, Sonnie thought. He began to understand the value that trains brought to any town when he found out that Bellevue probably wouldn't have survived except for the building of the Mad River Railroad and then the Toledo, Norwalk and Cleveland line. The Nickel Plate Railroad was prominently represented at the museum also. No one knew where exactly the name Nickel Plate came from, but it seemed that the name was held with affection. Sonnie vowed to look more closely at trains and train travel in old movies, even though he thinks movies without computer-generated effects are hokey. Annie likes to watch old movies from time to time, so maybe he'd see some train footage with her.

In the past year, Sonnie had read in the newspaper about homes on the north side of Bellevue flooding. He'd read that the land around here is glacial till lain over very porous limestone so when flooding occurs, the limestone can hold only so much water and when it gets saturated, water enters basements more from below than from above. The problem with this is that the water stays in basements long after the surface floodwaters recede.

On his way into Fremont he crossed over a bike path, the North Coast Inland Trail. He was going right by the Hayes Presidential Center in Fremont and decided to pull in for just a minute. He'd already used a lot of time at the railroad museum but he remembered coming to the Presidential Center when he was in elementary school. It had been a lot of fun. There were costumed interpreters and, from the viewpoint of a kid he didn't care much about President Hayes and the fact that he and his wife, Lucy Webb, worked hard after the Civil War to reconstruct the south or that Lucy had graduated from college. What Sonnie did enjoy back then was eating his sack lunch on the porch of the old house and that a couple of people were playing old timey music. Then the kids got to run around in the grass under all of those glorious trees. There hadn't been a lot of trees at his grandparent's farm nor many places in this part of the state when he was growing up.

While in a musing mood and thinking of things being hot and dry, he recalled that his mother complained that when she was pregnant with him in 1988 it had been a hot, dry summer, one made all the more miserable because she was pregnant. It was so bad in fact that Fremont's city officials invited Crow Dog, a Sioux medicine man, to lead rain dances and prayer services. Because of the drought, the city cancelled fireworks and thousands of fish died behind Ballville Dam on the Sandusky River in Fremont.

After finishing up in Fremont, Sonnie headed west, northwest to Elmore and he saw more of the North Coast Inland Trail. Stephano had told him that about 60 miles of it was completed and when it was done, it would be 190 miles long and it would cross the state connecting Pennsylvania with Indiana and possibly a spur route would go up to Michigan. He decided then that this trail was justification for him to get a new bike, one that he could use on the trail.

In Elmore Sonnie stopped in at Mantiques to pick up a vintage telephone that he'd had refurbished for his grandfather who enjoyed the heft and the slower pace of an old phone with a rotary dial. While Sonnie was there, he looked around the shop that is filled with antiques that appeal mainly to men. Among the interesting items are a pair of Eva Braun's silk panties (\$7,500) and a hand written and signed letter by Mark Twain/Samuel Clemens (\$18,500).

Over dinner at his grandparents' home in Elmore, Sonnie told them of his travels that day. Henry told them about an interesting character who had lived in Fremont and Bellevue, Frank Smith. Frank was a Civil War veteran who had spent a considerable amount of time in confederate prisons and Frank had been quite an active patriot.

Frank Smith mounted a Victor phonograph and an American flag to a wheelbarrow and played patriotic music while walking the streets. When Italians moved to Bellevue in 1896 to work in the quarries, they were not well received. Frank wheeled his wheelbarrow to the Bellevue Stone Company where he found 20 Italians playing cards. Frank played Italian songs for them and he had added an Italian flag to the wheelbarrow. Frank then gave them a lesson in American history. Later he visited Italians living in Nickel Plate Railroad cars and brought them food. Then other Bellevue residents pitched in to help the Italians. Smith once found a new phonograph on his front porch steps.

Henry had heard about Frank Smith from his uncle, who loved to talk about the small-statured, distinguished man who walked the streets with his patriotic wheelbarrow.

After working a day at Excel Bike, and shopping for a bike that he would enjoy riding on the North Coast Inland Trail (not his BMX one,) Sonnie headed to Perrysburg where he needed to interview a Mrs. Louys.

Mrs. Louys was an elderly widow who was happy for any company. As luck would have it, she had just made a batch of her famous German puffs, made rich with eggs. She served them on a hot platter with orange sauce poured over top. Sonnie sat down with her and drank a glass of

milk and ate four puffs while she told her family's history. It was out of the scope of the census bureau's needs, but Sonnie had been driven to inaction by the aroma that had wafted out of Mrs. Louys' kitchen.

Mrs. Louys' great, great grandparents, the Golls, sailed from Bremen, Germany on an emigrant ship in the mid-nineteenth century. It had been a very difficult trip. The passengers were made to leave most of their luggage in the ship's hold. They were then crammed together in bunk beds that were located amidships where there was barely five feet of headroom. There was no ventilation or lighting. During storms, the entrance was kept closed so the air became even staler. The passengers weren't allowed to have oil lamps below until they protested. The captain relented and let them have lamps lit, but only until 8 PM.

The ship waited out a storm at the Isle of Wight in England. After they left England, many of the passengers became seasick; many were too ill to leave their bunks. The food was poor and of such scant amounts that it barely kept them alive. There were little to no provisions for hygiene. Lacking the reserves of the adults, some of the children died.

After six grueling weeks of travel, the ship landed at New York Harbor. After recuperating there for a few weeks, the Golls went up the Hudson River to Albany where they boarded a canal boat on the Erie Canal and took it across New York State to Buffalo, where they boarded another ship on Lake Erie bound for Cleveland. From Cleveland they went down the Ohio Erie Canal to central Ohio. From there they walked to the Great Black Swamp of northwest Ohio, the last settled area of the state because living with ague and malaria spread by the mosquitoes that thrived there was nearly impossible. There were also threats of Indian attacks.

The Golls joined other German settlers in German Township in Fulton County. The first thing that they did was build a log cabin. Later they built a substantial home using heavy timber frame construction and old-world building techniques that they had learned in Germany. The house is no longer in Mrs. Louys' family, but it is on the National Register of Historic Places.

They farmed most of their land, but let some of the acreage stay wooded, pretty much as they had found it, as primeval forest. The farm was in the Goll family for four generations and the name changed through marriage. In 1969 the Ohio Department of Natural Resources bought the 321 acre woods from Mr. and Mrs. Louys. Today it is designated as a state nature preserve and has as near a virgin stand of trees as can be found in Ohio at this time. While the trees are still here, it isn't swampy like it was when the Golls first came here.

The entire Black Swamp is drained and the nature of the forest and its floor are dramatically changed so Goll Woods is much drier than they were originally.

Mrs. Louys was enjoying Sonnie's appreciation of her cooking so she poured him another glass of milk and continued telling her family's story. She told him that her great uncle, Claude, had worked in a glass factory in a Bowling Green glass factory when he was a boy. Sonnie picked up at the mention of glass making since he'd just been to the Glass Heritage Museum in Fostoria. She saw lights of recognition in his eyes and while she thought that she should apologize for holding him hostage with her stories, she went on anyway.

Glass factories were already established in southeastern Ohio by the 1820s. But when natural gas was discovered in nearby Findlay in 1884, a glass-making boom occurred throughout northwest Ohio, aided by the fact that so many railroad lines were already established here.

The number of glass factories in Ohio went from nine employing 456 workers in 1870 to 39 employing 7,039 workers in 1901.

Glass making then was still an ancient craft whose tools and techniques were little changed over the centuries.

Many of Ohio's skilled glass blowers were from Belgium and Germany. The industry centered on the glass blower's skill, but he still needed many helpers to open and close molds and to carry and pack pieces. Young boys provided the cheapest labor. However, families were reluctant to hire their sons out, so glass companies had to come up with clever ways to lure them in. It rarely worked around here because this area was so underpopulated.

In 1888 the Nickel Plate Glass Company in Fostoria, seeking child labor, sent a letter to a Catholic Bishop in New York City asking him if he had any orphans to spare.

A large orphanage in Brooklyn, St. Johns Residence and School for Boys, was severely overcrowded with between 700 and 800 orphans. No one knew for sure what the actual number was. The orphanage had suffered two major fires in the previous four years and in one, 20 children had died.

A deal was struck. Sister Mary de Chantal, who ran the orphanage, brought 31 boys to Fostoria. She inspected the factory, arranged for "competent supervision" in their boarding house, and satisfied that they would be treated fairly, left them to work ten-hour days at the company. When anti-Catholic newspapers criticized this arrangement, Sister de Chantal complained,

*“It would seem more agreeable to some critics that the boys should be left on the streets to grow up wharf rats and corner loungers than that they should be sent out to learn an honorable industry.”*

A few months later, the Dalzell Gilmore and Leighton Company, desperate for replacement workers when 24 of its glass boys went on strike, followed suit and contracted with Sister de Chantal to bring 30 more boys to Findlay which prompted more sensational reports in unfriendly newspapers. After that, Sister Mary felt that the bad publicity was not worth the benefits of placing boys in Ohio and sent no more orphans from St. John’s.

While some of the boys were imported, great uncle Claude had answered an ad in the Bowling Green newspaper in 1888. She had a yellowed copy in her little-needed cookbook. It read:

*“From all the glass factories here come the report that they cannot run at their full capacity for want of boys to carry away the blown glass. To any poor families living in our neighboring towns, we will make this suggestion. If you have 2 or 3 boys from 12 to 18 years old who are willing to work for pay, the factories here will employ them all and their father too for the sake of getting the boys. No need of being without work, and sure pay every week.”*

One of Claude’s acquaintances was Will Foggett, who in 1892, jumped a train in North Baltimore filled with soldiers returning from the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago. A month earlier, Will had been hawking newspapers in Manhattan and living in the Newsboys Lodging House. The Zihlmann Glass Company in North Baltimore lured Will and 24 other boys there with the promise of a good bed, clean clothes and 50 cents per day.

When they arrived in North Baltimore, they found that the conditions at the factory were less than promised. The Town Marshall confronted the boys at the railroad station and told them that Joseph Zihlmann said that they each owed him \$10.60 for train fare. They were also verbally abused, made to work from sun up to sun down, and given only watery soup to eat.

Will took his opportunity to escape when he jumped onto the train. After he told his story to the soldiers, two of them reported Foggett’s case to Evan Davis, the state factory inspector, who immediately went to North Baltimore and confirmed Will’s story. He also found only seven of the original 24 boys still working at Zihlmann’s, the others having managed to escape.

While some of the glass boys were tramp boys moving from one factory to another, most were not. Many of them went to the factories to help with their family's struggling income or were even the sole earners. Losing even one parent in that era to death, incapacity, desertion or divorce was not uncommon and single-family homes were unheard of. A child with only one parent was instantly orphaned.

Besides having to work in the super heated conditions of the furnace rooms, the air in glass factories was filled with fine glass dust. Respiratory diseases were the leading cause of death among glass workers. "Burn out" was a term used to describe someone overcome by heat and weakness in the furnace room. The boys sustained serious injuries.

The glass boys fostered a strong sense of camaraderie and they frequently went on strike. In 1890, a strike at the Corning Glass Works in upstate New York led to a critical shortage of light bulbs needed by the Edison General Electric Company for its booming electric business. An idle Libby Glass Company plant in Findlay was leased to produce the bulbs. Michael Owens was put in charge as plant superintendent. The son of poor Irish immigrants, Michael got his start in the glass business as a carrying-in boy at a glass factory in Wheeling, West Virginia.

Shortly after full production was under way at Libby Glass, the mold boys went on strike. Owens responded to the strike by sketching out the design of a new mold that could be manipulated by the glass blower without assistance. Even with the strike, the company produced bulbs at a significant profit.

Owens went on to invent a fully automated bottle-making machine that revolutionized the glass industry and he created the Owens Bottle Company.

Because child labor laws were then beginning to be better defined and enforced, there was an even greater shortage of child laborers. Owens began to make the investment in adding conveyor systems to its automatic machines thereby reducing the need for taking-out boys and carrying-in boys.

When Mrs. Louys was just a little girl in the early 1920s, the days of the glass boys were over and she was thankful for that. She would never forget her Uncle Claude's stories though about working in the glass factory when he was a boy.

By the mid 1920s the Owens Bottle Company began looking at Illinois Glass as a potential acquisition. The patents on Owens's machines were nearing expiration, and the company stood to lose

substantial revenue from its licensing program. Illinois Glass was doing well and was an Owens licensee. The two companies merged in 1929, representing the largest merger in the history of the glass industry to date. The Owens-Illinois Glass Company (O-I) was born, and its headquarters established in Toledo. It is still the largest producer of glass bottles in the United States with a large plant in Perrysburg.

Sonnie understood that glass making here helped explain the affluence that he saw in Perrysburg. It was probably also due to the fact that it is just three miles from Toledo and it has some industry that supports automobile manufacturing. He didn't know how those workers would fare in the upcoming months. No one does.

After Sonnie thanked Mrs. Louys for the treats and the stories, he completed five more interviews in Perrysburg. Then he went to Fort Meigs to toss a golf disc around. There was plenty of room there. Fort Meigs is one of the largest reconstructed forts in the country. The place felt festive with all of the dog walkers there. That is until gray clouds laden with water rolled in. Big, cold drops fell and Sonnie grabbed up his disc and went into the visitor's center to wait out the storm and to use the facilities.

He wasn't intending to have another history lesson that day, but he thought he might as well look around. He joined the Ohio Historical Society for \$35 so he could tour here, and other OHS sites with Annie for free. Otherwise he would have paid the one-time \$8 admission fee.

Growing up in Norwalk and visiting Port Clinton and South Bass Island, Sonnie was aware of Commodore Perry defeating the British on Lake Erie but hadn't really cared as he didn't relate to Perry's accomplishment. He'd been more concerned with riding the rides at Cedar Point and eating sno cones.

Now that he had seen the walls of Fort Meigs in the fading light and under stormy skies, he wasn't in any hurry to venture outside. He was primed to absorb the history on display there. There were guy things such as, weapons, maps, soldier's letters and uniforms.

It was in 1813 that the Americans were doing miserably against the British and the Indians, and so it was decided that a fort needed to be built to help defend this area. In early February the site of the rapids of the Maumee was chosen. William Henry Harrison was put in charge. In February there was ice and mud and the living conditions were terrible. Two to three men died every day during the fort's construction.

The fort was nearly completed by April and with the improving weather came greater fear of attack. Reinforcements and supplies were

arriving at the fort as a major attack was expected to occur so the men became edgy. One private shot a horse thinking that it was an Indian. Another private went totally off of the deep end and threatened to blow up the fort's armory and defect to the British side.

By the end of April, the British and the Indians, led by Tecumseh were gathering on the opposite bank of the Maumee River.

The British began bombarding Fort Meigs with their superior firepower on May 1st, 1813. They heated up their cannonballs in an attempt to ignite the fort's powder magazines. These boiled in the mud when they landed. This serious assault by the British continued for some days while the Americans, who were not as well armed, shot back with more precision. The Indians moved in closer, climbed trees and shot from higher up.

The loss of life in the fort was minimized because of the traverses, earthen mounds, built inside the fort.

On May 5<sup>th</sup> 1,200 Kentucky reinforcements came down the Maumee River. A detachment of 800 soldiers led by Colonel Dudley managed to disable the British cannons. Then they retreated to the safety of the fort.

The Indians trying to lure them out from behind the safety of the fort's walls had subjected the Fort Meigs soldiers to ruses. The soldiers never fell for them. However, Dudley's soldiers, energized by their recent success, fell for just such a ruse and chased the Indians into the forest. There they were surrounded and 650 men were either killed or captured. The captives were taken to Fort Miamis, a British fort built in 1794 near present-day Maumee, Ohio. The Kentuckians were slaughtered until Tecumseh arrived and stopped it. This event became known as 'Dudley's Defeat.'

After 'Dudley's Defeat' there were many wounded men to tend to and men to bury. The American soldiers also retrieved the abandoned cannons and shot. Life in and around the fort grew quieter except for contagious diseases that plagued the men, such as, measles and mumps.

There was a second British siege on Fort Meigs in July, but it didn't equal the first and after a week, a great thundershower occurred and the siege was essentially rained out.

Later on the Indians fired more shots in an attempt to lure the soldiers out from behind the walls of the fort. It didn't work and by July 31<sup>st</sup> the Indian warriors and the British soldiers had left the Maumee Valley.

The visitors' center also had a bit of information about Perrysburg. It and Washington D.C. are the only two towns in America that were platted by the federal government. Perrysburg suffered terribly in the

cholera epidemic of 1854 with more than 100 people dying from it. The town quarantined itself for two months that summer.

The present storm over Fort Meigs passed over, and Sonnie left in his old, bestickered, blue sedan. About a year ago his car had been stolen but he got it back, because a friend of his recognized it. There was no mistaking his car.

On the edge of Perrysburg, Sonnie saw the arresting looking mosque with its dome and minarets of the Greater Toledo Islamic Center. He was wearing shorts so he wouldn't have been allowed inside even if they were open that evening. However, he did stop to read the Ohio Historical Society plaque by the front entrance and he found out that the first Muslim immigrants came to Toledo in the 1920s from Syria and Lebanon. They built their first Islamic center in Toledo in 1954 but by the early 1970s, they had outgrown it and then made plans for this center. This was the first mosque built in an architecturally classic Islamic style in the U.S. He'd heard that it was progressive and was the first in the country, and possibly the world, to have a female Imam, a spiritual leader.

Sonnie needed to return to his grandparents' home that night for dinner, of course, and to reprogram the stations on their television. They had just installed a digital converter box. The stations that they watched were disappearing and they didn't know why. Technology was making Henry and Ethyl feel obsolete. Sonnie tried explaining to them that some stations were only broadcasting in digital and no longer in analog. That didn't matter beans to Ethyl and Henry, they just wanted WGTE, the public television station in Toledo back on.

They had ham and potato au gratin followed by no-bake éclair dessert. Both recipes came out of the Lutheran Church cookbook that Ethyl had picked up at Beekers' Store in Pemberville.

They didn't have the converter box manual, so Sonny had to punch away at the numerous accumulated remotes but finally he got WGTE on and then they watched a locally produced show about Sauder Village in Archbold.

Eire Sauder started the village with its 40 historic buildings in 1976. Not only are there crafts people, such as woodworkers and broom makers working in traditional pioneer crafts, but there are some artists as well. There are various collections encompassing historic tools, farming equipment and vintage clothing. Sonnie woke up from his after dinner stupor when he heard the Goll family name mentioned. Erie had

purchased vintage clothing from the Golls. Sonnie told his grandparents that he had talked with Mrs. Louys who was a Goll descendant. The program went on to show pieces of the Voigt plumbing collection. Voigt had operated a plumbing and heating supply business in Holgate and then in Defiance. Sonnie began to nod off again. The program mentioned that a person could shop freely but that to enter the historic village, there was an entrance fee of \$12.50 for adults and \$6.50 for children. Children under 6 get in for free. There was to be a special event in the middle of June, "Dairy Days."

Sonnie daydreamed that maybe when he and Annie got married, they would pick out their first pieces of furniture at the Sauder Village Outlet Store. It is RTA, ready-to-assemble furniture so it isn't very expensive. Plus, neither of them would mind making a stop at the Sweet Shop for fudge.

Next, the program told the story of Sauder Woodworking, also in Archbold. Near the end of the Great Depression, Erie and Leona Sauder started a woodworking business in their barn where Erie made things needed by local farmers, e.g., chicken crates and cabinets. A year later Erie and Leona, and five factory workers were keeping busy and making church pews. With the leftover wood, Erie made small, occasional tables. Then they got an order for 25,000 tables. Erie expanded the business to meet the need.

In the 1940s Sauder Woodworking and Manufacturing continued to expand and they invested in greater automation. In 1951 Erie invented the "knock down" table, one that was packed flat in a box and that the purchaser would put together. This was the start of RTA furniture.

In keeping with Erie's "waste nothing" mentality, Sauder designed and constructed a power generating facility that converts sawdust into electricity.

The company grew over the next two decades in square footage and in the number of people employed. There are approximately 4 million square-feet of manufacturing and warehouse space in Archbold.

Sonnie rubbed his eyes to wake himself and said good bye to his grandparents. He was headed off to Defiance to see Annie.

The next day was Saturday. Sonnie was headed to the bike shop for a day-long shift and then he and his buddies were heading to Summit Motorsports, about four miles from Norwalk, to watch the Hot Rod Nationals.

On Monday, Sonnie went to Bowling Green where he had an interview with Wood County Commissioner, Tim Brown. He learned

that 70% of Wood County is in farming. Tim talked with pride about the power generating windmills built in 2003-04 on landfill property at Poe and Tontogany roads and is so far, the only wind farm in Ohio

They make an impressive sight as the turbine blades reach nearly 400 feet to catch the wind. They generate enough power for 3,000 residents or 1800 homes.

The program is so successful that the Wood County commissioners are looking at building a bigger wind farm, not at the present location because they are out of room, but somewhere else in Wood County. Initial start up costs are high but they are looking to become more energy independent and hope to be running less expensively especially if a carbon fuels use tax is imposed and as a result coal use becomes more expensive.

The Ohio Department of Development has already approved a \$2 million grant for the proposed Wood County wind farm. Governor Ted Strickland encourages Ohio communities to investigate and develop alternative energy sources.

Tim told Sonnie to stop by and tour one of the windmills. At the site, a solar-powered kiosk provides information, including current information on wind speeds and the amount of energy being produced by the turbines.

After the interview with Tim, Sonnie walked outside and admired the Wood County courthouse next door with its tall clock tower and huge clock. Since he had gained an appreciation for county courthouses recently, he went inside. There he saw a painting of Fort Meigs and another of a nearby town with many oil derricks and a train passing through, obviously two very important events to local residents when the courthouse was built in the late 1890s. Sonnie wondered if maybe a picture of the wind turbines, signaling the start of greater energy independence, might be added some day.

Sonnie had heard that couples hold wedding receptions at Snook's Dream Cars in Bowling Green so he thought that he would check it out. He found it at 13920 County Home Road. He paid the \$5 admission and looked around at all of the automobile memorabilia and the car collection that includes cars from the 1930s to the 1960s. It was a fabulous space and he could imagine the possibilities for a cool reception but didn't know if they could afford it, nor if it was anything Annie or her parents' would like, but Sonnie likes to think big.

On his way to Snook's, he passed The Wood County Museum, located in the old county infirmary on County Home Road. It is a big place with many old buildings related to the farm, as the infirmary had been self-sufficient, growing most of the food that the residents and staff needed. Sonnie stopped in there too. There were rooms and rooms of historic displays in the main building. One especially gruesome one was a jar of fingers that had been used as evidence in a local murder trial over a century ago. He didn't stay a long time since he had to get some more work done back in town and he needed to find lunch.

Uraku, on East Wooster Street, was Sonnie's choice for lunch where he had great sushi. He hoped to some day bring Annie here for a ride on the Slippery Elm Trail south of town and then to Uraku for dinner. He figured that she would also enjoy visiting the antique stores in Bowling Green.

Sonnie could walk to his next two appointments. This gave him the opportunity to admire the fine homes built here in the 1890s and 1900s when oil fortunes were made. When he was done, he stopped in at the Call of the Canyon Café on North Main Street for coffee and dessert.

Sonnie, while welcome anywhere and who had stuffed in numerous homes, didn't yet have a real home. Cell phones and the internet made that remarkably possible. Since he was returning to the Bowling Green area the next day, he drove the 12 miles or so back up to Perrysburg and stayed overnight at the KOA campground with just a tent and a sleeping bag. He always kept those things in his trunk for "just in case."

For breakfast the next morning he went to Ben's Table on South Main in Bowling Green and gorged on an omelet and a side order of pancakes topped with blueberries. Since he was alone, Sonnie picked up a local flyer that listed the upcoming events in Bowling Green. The National Tractor Pulling Championships were going to be held at the Wood County Fairgrounds this summer. Main Street was going to be blocked to traffic in September for the Black Swamp Arts Festival. The 1926 Cla-Zel Theatre had its summer movie series and live music schedule listed. It seemed that they served cocktails too. During the arts festival, Cla-Zel was going to show art films. There was a brief mention of WinterFest to be held in February 2010. It would feature ice-skating and ice hockey at Bowling Green University to celebrate snow and most likely to break up long and dreary winters. Usually, local celebrity and Olympic skating champion, Scott Hamilton shows up for WinterFest.

From Bowling Green, Sonnie headed west to Malinta where he could see that it was another town built around railroads. He called on Charley Geist Jr., an elderly blind man who certainly needed help filling out his extended census form. It was a good thing that Sonnie had had such a great breakfast. He was in for the long haul with Charley, but Charley wasn't serving up any homemade goodies. Charley had lots of stories to tell Sonnie and so he did. He talked about how French lumbermen came into the Black Swamp in the years before the Civil War. They looked for giant oak trees which they cut and took out for ship timbers. He said that the name Malinta was the first postmaster's daughter's name.

Charley's grandfather had had a muskrat farm and was quite poor until WWI when the price of muskrat fur went up. Their pelts were needed to line soldier's helmets.

Charley Sr. worked for the Malinta Silo Company where they made cement stave silos. They were molded at the plant and then taken by truck to farms where they were erected.

About 1912 Charley Sr. had several bushels of pheasant eggs shipped to him. He distributed them to farmers, who raised them and pheasants were hunted here for years after that.

In the spring of 1931, when Charley Jr. was a boy, there was a mysterious explosion in a ditch near Malinta. A tree was scorched, and a large hole was left. Windows a half of a mile away were broken and the glass fell outward. Nobody discovered the source of the explosion.

Charley asked Sonnie where he was going next and Sonnie said that he was heading west to the Maumee River. Charley told him that when he gets to the Maumee he'll see Girty's Island.

In the 1700's George Girty ran an Indian trading post on the island and his brother, the famous Simon Girty had hidden out there.

When Simon Girty was a young man living in Pennsylvania, Seneca Indians adopted him and brought him to Ohio. Simon Girty sided with the British to fight in the Revolution in the Ohio Territory. He was present when Colonel William Crawford, Crawford's nephew and son-in-law were burned at the stake in Wyandot County, near Upper Sandusky. This was done in retaliation for the massacre of 100 innocent Native Americans living at Gnadenhutten, over by the Tuscarawas River in eastern Ohio. Simon Girty was criticized for not stepping in to save Crawford, but that would have been a likely fatal mistake for him.

In 1833 Girty's Island was covered in a dense forest, indigenous to the rich soil. On some of the small islands surrounding it, grew great quantities of wild onions. The smaller islands have since disappeared.

The larger portion of the main island has been somewhat diminished from its original size by ice and wash. In the early 1900's visitors came by ferry to visit an amusement park and dance hall that were there.

Many relics have been plowed up on the farms adjoining the river, such as sabers, gun barrels and bullets; also Indian relics such as rings, brooches, buckles, tomahawks, pipes, stone hammers and arrowheads.

Charley also told Sonnie that the area between Girty's and Florida was where a lot of Native Americans had camps in the 1800's. For years they returned each year and burned bones at the graves of their friends.

When Sonnie left Charley's he went north on Henry Street and saw the railroad depot from the Nickel Plate and Clover Leaf Line railroad days. Three local guys have made it into a small railroading museum.

In Florida Sonnie stopped to get a drink at the Miami and Erie Market. Contemplating his surroundings, he could see by the buildings that it was one of the oldest settlements around. To his surprise, he was getting an eye for canal-era building styles. He figured that the market had been named for the Miami and Erie Canal that had run along the Maumee and he could see remnants of the canal bed along the river.

On his way into Defiance to see Annie, he stopped at the Independence Dam State Park where he played a game of disc golf. He really noticed for the first time, the picnic shelter built by the CCC in 1934. After his time with Charley Geist Jr., he wondered if Charley had ever worked for the CCC during the Great Depression.

Sonnie finished up his job with the census bureau and about a month later, a check came in the mail that took care of the amount of money that he needed to buy Annie a proper ring. He had all sorts of ideas planned around asking her. He thought of making her dinner served with a bottle of Marechal Foch that he had picked up from the Stoney Ridge Winery near Pulaski.

But the very day that he was coming from the jeweler's with the ring in his pocket he saw Annie driving in the other direction. Of course she noticed him in his car covered with stickers right away, so she stopped to say a quick, "*Hi.*"

Sonnie, impetuous as he is, had held himself in far too long, and right then and there he jumped out of the car, knelt down in the street as she looked at him, surprised. She still had the car in gear with her foot on the brake and when he asked her, she stalled the engine with a sputter and a lurch. She jumped out, a mess of confusion at this unexpected turn of events, and kissed him.

## GOBA Digest - 2009

☎ **Emergency Number during GOBA: 614-273-0811**  
only from 12 noon on Saturday, 6/20...to...2 pm on Saturday, 6/27

### GOBA Safety Pledge

#### I hereby pledge to:

1. Obey all traffic signals and Ohio and local traffic laws.
2. Stay on the right half of the road when passing and as far to the right as practical for all other times.
3. Announce and signal all turns.
4. Announce "Stopping" when I intend to stop, and move completely off the road after stopping.
5. Wear a helmet at ALL times when on my bicycle, even in the campgrounds.
6. Allow adequate distance when following behind other bicycles.
7. Take downhill with caution.
8. Walk single file far right when walking hills.
9. Point out or announce hazards to cyclists behind me who may not be able to see them clearly.
10. Be courteous to motorists, knowing that their impression of bicyclists can be shaped by my actions.
11. Ride no more than two abreast, and single file in presence of passing traffic (bicycle or vehicle).
12. Obey directions from GOBA officials and local authorities.
13. Stay on the designated route.
14. (For riders 15 and under) stay within sight distance of my parent/guardian.



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