

# I'm Gonna Get Me Some

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**Sometime in 2021**  
**Kansas City, Missouri**

*I'm going to Kansas City, Kansas City here I come  
I'm going to Kansas City, Kansas City here I come  
They got some crazy lil' women there  
And I'm gonna get me one.*

I will be importing my own “crazy lil’ woman” when we go to Kansas City but, apparently, she will have competition.

*I'm gonna be standing on the corner  
Of Twelfth Street and Vine  
I'm gonna be standing on the corner  
Of Twelfth Street and Vine  
With my Kansas City baby  
And a bottle of Kansas City wine.*

I would take my Kansas City baby to the corner of 12<sup>th</sup> Street and Vine, except that intersection no longer exists. We will however be going to the 18<sup>th</sup> and Vine Jazz district, and there will be wine involved.

*Well, I might take a train,  
I might take a plane, but if I have to walk,  
I'm going just the same  
I'm going to Kansas City, Kansas City here I come  
They got some crazy lil' women there  
And I'm gonna get me one.*



*Gem Theatre at 18th and Vine*

I never knew that Kansas City wine was a thing. Turns out, the Kansas - Missouri wine corridor is the second largest wine producing region in the US, just behind California. They have some distinctive grapes in the region, which produce very high-quality wines, and ...

**... I'm gonna get me some.**

[https://youtu.be/UonBS\\_mvW-E](https://youtu.be/UonBS_mvW-E)

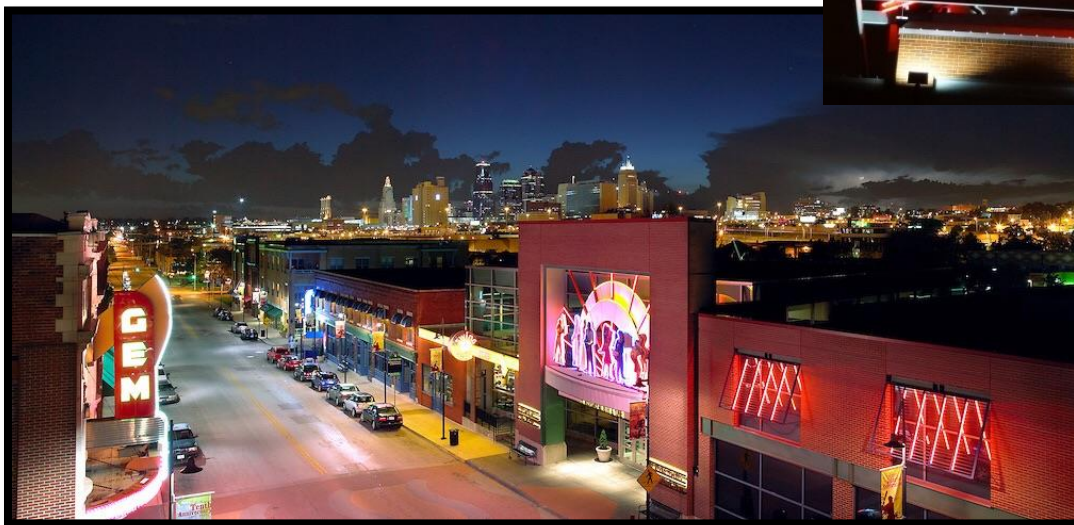
*Kansas City – Wilbert Harrison*

Watch in the middle of the second stanza, a few “crazy little women” start screaming and swooning. Poor Wilbert gets flushed, he can’t keep his eyes off them.



Negro Leagues Baseball Museum

18th Street - Kansas City, Missouri



# Willie the Rat, Jr.

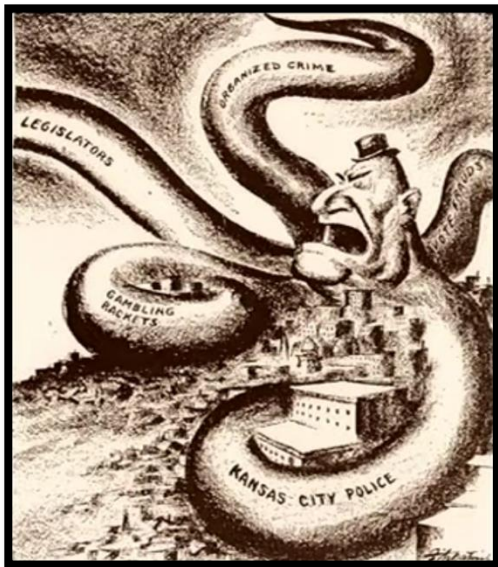
June 17, 1933

Kansas City, Missouri

If you take a close look at the picture on the right, you will notice an FBI agent laying on the ground between the two cars. He is one of four officers killed on June 17, 1933, in front of Union Station.

One mobster, Frank Nash, also died in the *Kansas City Massacre*.

Well-organized mafia families have operated in Kansas City since 1912, when Sicilian immigrants Joseph and Peter DiGiovanni started a racketeering operation in the downtown core. The DiGiovanni family expanded over the years, into gambling and prostitution. They used profits from their illicit operations to influence police and politicians.



During the prohibition years of the 1920's and early 1930's, the mob took complete control of the city. They *owned* high-ranking politicians and had most of the Kansas City police force on their payroll. Every gambling den, prostitute and speakeasy in the city was under mafia control.

Nobody in Kansas City got a drink, a building permit, or a roll in the hay unless the mob got a cut.

In true gangster form, they all had impressive nicknames: "Charlie the Wop" Carrollo, "Willie the Rat" Cammisano and "Las Vegas Pete" Simone strode the streets of Kansas City as if they owned it, which of course they did.



On the day in question, mob bosses had hired gunmen to free Frank Nash from custody.

Among the hired guns was Charles Arthur "Pretty Boy" Floyd, a rising star in the organized crime world.



Nash had been convicted of murder and was serving a life sentence in Leavenworth Prison. He escaped and had been on the run for three years. Nash was recaptured in Arkansas and authorities were transporting him back to Kansas City, by train. Mob bosses were informed of the operation, including the train number and arrival time. The gangsters set up an ambush outside Union Station.

"Pretty Boy" Floyd and five other gunmen placed themselves at strategic hidden locations around the station. Seven FBI and Kansas City Police officers emerged from the station with handcuffed Nash among them. The officers placed the mobster in the front seat of a Chevrolet car and were about to drive away. Floyd and the other gangsters hadn't seen where Nash was placed in the car, they weren't aware he was in the passenger seat, with the officers in the back. Floyd and the gangsters opened fire. One of the first to die was their associate, Frank Nash.

Every police officer in the car was killed, except one in the back seat - spared because the gangsters got the wrong guy.

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The Kansas City mob is alive and well. We won't run into "Willie the Rat" Cammisano when we travel there, Willie is long dead, but his son is still active, a high-ranking Capo in the underground crime syndicate.



If we visit all the wrong places, and do all the wrong things in Kansas City, Bear and I may cross paths with ...

...Willie the Rat, Jr.

# Bridges

June 2, 1995

Madison County, Iowa

Everybody I know has had their hand on this door latch a time or two in life. The fist in the picture happens to belong to Meryl Streep, but it is everybody's hand.

Streep's character, Francesca is agonizing over a decision. Does she pull the handle and run to her lover Robert (Clint Eastwood), or release the latch, and stay with her husband and family on their Iowa farm.



No matter what happens next, somebody is going to get hurt.

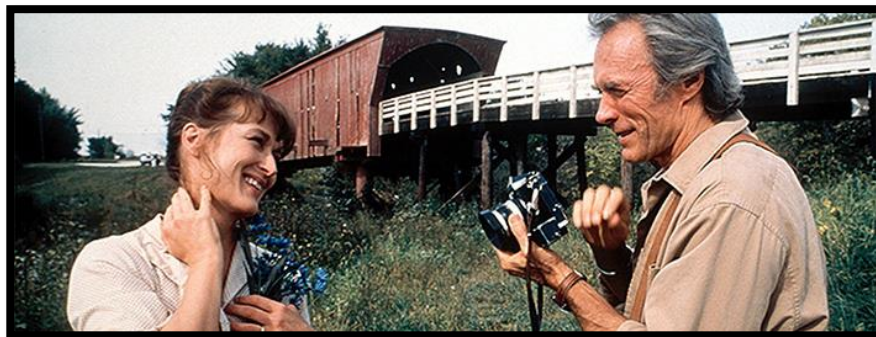


The Bridges of Madison County is on our Iowa agenda. The namesake movie was a sensation in 1995, and still resonates. It strikes a chord with anyone who has ever faced a life-changing decision, which is everybody.

Roseman Covered Bridge  
– near Winterset, Madison County, Iowa

When we go, I intend to steer Bear around any handsome photographers. At this stage in life, I really have no desire to cross any ...

.... Bridges



# No.... It's Iowa.

**August 12, 2021**  
**Dyersville, Iowa**

Major League Baseball built a ballpark at the *Field of Dreams* movie set near Dyersville, Iowa. They intended to host an off-site regular season game there last year – but nobody came.

Covid threw a wrench into MLB's plans, but they have rescheduled for August 2021. I have no idea if the border will reopen in time, or if we will even be able to get tickets; there are only 8000 seats, and they are going to be a very hot item. But I am going to give it a try.



Let me know how many seats you want me to reserve for you.<sup>1</sup>



**“Shoeless” Joe Jackson:** *“Is this Heaven?”*

**Ray Kinsella:** *“No... it's Iowa.”*

<sup>1</sup> I am serious, IF the border is open, and IF I can reserve multiple tickets, I will get as many as there are people willing to join us at the *Field of Dreams* in Iowa.



# VOLTS

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**July 30, 2005**  
**Billings, Montana**

Our first stop on the way to Iowa will be Billings. We will cross the border at Coutts, then blaze through *the land of no stop signs and no speed limits*, to the first waypoint.

The last time we visited Billings was 2005, and it was unintentional. We were flying from Saskatchewan to a family reunion in Rapid City, South Dakota in my Cessna. “We” consisted of Bear and I, with Riley and her cousin Marissa in the back seat. Billings wasn’t on the original flight plan, but circumstances conspired to send us there.



They call Montana “*Big Sky Country*” for a reason. It is not that the sky is any bigger than anywhere else, it is just that there are less land-based obstructions to limit the view, and no smog.



Saskatchewan describes itself as “*Land of the Living Skies*”. The Canadian prairie sky goes beyond “big”. It stretches from horizon to horizon at every diagonal on the compass. During the day, the sky is flooded with light, at night more stars appear than most people dream possible. Northern lights often dance across the entire canopy of the night sky. Early morning seeps colour into existence and by evening, every cloud is a pallet, a whirling blend of vibrant hues.

Our trip started in the *Land of Living Skies* to pick up Marissa and traversed *Big Sky Country*. From the perspective of a light aircraft flying two miles above sea level, the volume and vibrancy of the prairie sky is beyond *Big* or *Alive*, it is *Overwhelming*.

We were all in awe as our tiny capsule of aluminum slipped through ever changing skies. It is a surreal feeling to be floating on air watching the majesty of nature drift by.

We were especially enthralled by boiling dark Towering Cumulous clouds building in the south. The radio would occasionally crackle in response to distant lightening, but we felt secure in our flying machine, watching the TCU's at a distance. It is a powerful feeling.

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And then, something happened to remind us just how very insignificant our power is in relation to the sky and nature. A little red message appeared on the aircraft display panel: **VOLTS**. That single word changed power to vulnerability in an instant.

Airplanes, like cars, have alternators which generate battery power. If the alternator in your car fails, a light comes on and you pull over to check it. In most cases you can carry on to your destination or find a repair shop. An inconvenience for sure, but not life-threatening. When the alternator light comes on while you are two miles vertical, it is a different story.

The warning indicator immediately diverted my attention from sky watching, to damage control. Situationally we were safe, and the aircraft's other functions were all stable, so there was no immediate danger. I checked circuit breakers and increased RPM, but it was clear that this was not a glitch, it was a real problem.

An aircraft will fly just fine without an alternator, it is all the electrical gadgetry that suffers. If the battery is not being supplied with power it will drain, and all electrical functions go with it. Radios, navigation equipment and handy little things like flaps for landing, won't work. It is important to preserve power and get on the ground before really bad things happen.



Photo courtesy Gervais Goodman

Suddenly *Big Sky Country* was no longer a positive attribute. *Big Sky* implies remote towns, fewer still with an airport.

I shut off every non-essential electrical drain and punched NRST on the GPS. This handy little button prompts a display of every airport in the vicinity. There are countless airports in Montana but most of them are remote airstrips, without maintenance facilities. I was looking for a place to land where they might have a spare alternator kicking around. I scrolled through the list, eliminating towns like



Sweetgrass Springs (which sounds lovely, but is probably in an alternator-free zone). Five, ever-distancing airports later, KBIL popped up.

Billings! That's a big town and only 55 nautical miles south. I hit the "direct to" button on the GPS and banked the airplane to a heading of 180 degrees.

While I was diagnosing the electrical problem and finding alternate airports, I was still flying the airplane, monitoring the radio, watching the weather, and maintaining the confidence of my passengers. The plane was flying smoothly, and I was in uncontrolled airspace, so there wasn't much radio work to do, I filled my co-pilot in on our situation and our revised destination. Bear kicked into full *on-duty* mode.

Hey girls! There is a town close by that has great restaurants and a shopping mall. Do you want to go there for the night?

Yes! Yay!

✓ I clicked *Passenger Management* off the checklist.

Now, my problems were down to two, battery life and weather. My Cessna flies at about 135 knots per hour; KBIL was now 50 nautical miles away. With that distance to cover, airport circuit maneuvering, landing and taxiing time, I calculated that I needed the battery to last another 45 minutes. It seemed possible, but I didn't really know how much juice it had left.

The weather was a bigger concern. The storm we had enjoyed watching from a distance had become a malevolent force. It seemed to be more than 50 miles away, but it was directly in our path, growing, and moving toward us. It was a case of which comes first, KBIL or TCU.

I did a final assessment of the situation and made a decision. KBIL seemed achievable, but there were some alternate airports along the way if things went very wrong. I doubt Sweetgrass Springs has a shopping mall, but the girls would get over it if we had to land there.



It was time to talk to somebody.

*Billings Tower, this is Cessna 182 Gulf, Sierra, X-Ray, Sierra, we are on a VFR flight plan, from Great Falls to Rapid City. Currently 50 miles north of your position at 9500 feet. We have a mechanical issue and wish to divert to Billings for landing.*

*Sierra, X-Ray, Sierra, Billings Tower. Are you declaring an emergency?*

*Billings Tower, Sierra, X-Ray, Sierra. Negative on the emergency, we have an alternator failure but should have enough battery life for landing KBIL. Could we get a weather check, please?*

*Sierra, X-Ray, Sierra, Billings Tower. You are cleared straight in runway 1-6, altitude at your discretion, you are number one. There is thunderstorm activity in the vicinity. Current conditions visibility 5 miles, wind 150 at 10 knots, temperature 28, dew point 22, altimeter 2-9-9-9. Squawk 5-4-5-3.*

*Billings Tower, Sierra, X-Ray, Sierra. Squawking 5-4-5-3, straight in 1-6, number one, descending through 8,000. Anticipate the field in 15 minutes.*

*Sierra, X-Ray, Sierra, Billings Tower. Read back correct. We will keep you posted on weather changes.*



15 minutes isn't very long, but it seemed like an eternity that day. I checked on my passengers, Bear was concerned, but focused, Riley and Marissa were playing *rock, paper, scissors*.

Landing preparation routine, emergency checklist and weather monitoring kept me busy, and I soon had KBIL in sight. We had slowed down to 110 knots and descended through 5,000', so I put down 10 degrees of flaps. It was early, and it would slow us down even more but, if the battery failed, at least we would have some brakes.

The cloud south of KBIL was growing, a towering black monster now. It was not over the airport yet but close enough that there would be turbulence. There were a few other aircraft in the control zone, but I could tell that KBIL Tower was positioning all of them to come in behind us.

*Billings Tower, Sierra, X-Ray, Sierra. We are on three mile final 1-6. If we lose radio-contact our intent is to exit at the first available taxiway and proceed directly to the Shell apron.*

*Sierra, X-Ray, Sierra, Billings Tower. Cleared to land. Winds 1-5-0 at 15 gusting to 25. You are cleared to the Shell, taxiway of your choice.*

*Sierra, X-Ray, Sierra. Cleared to land, and taxi.*

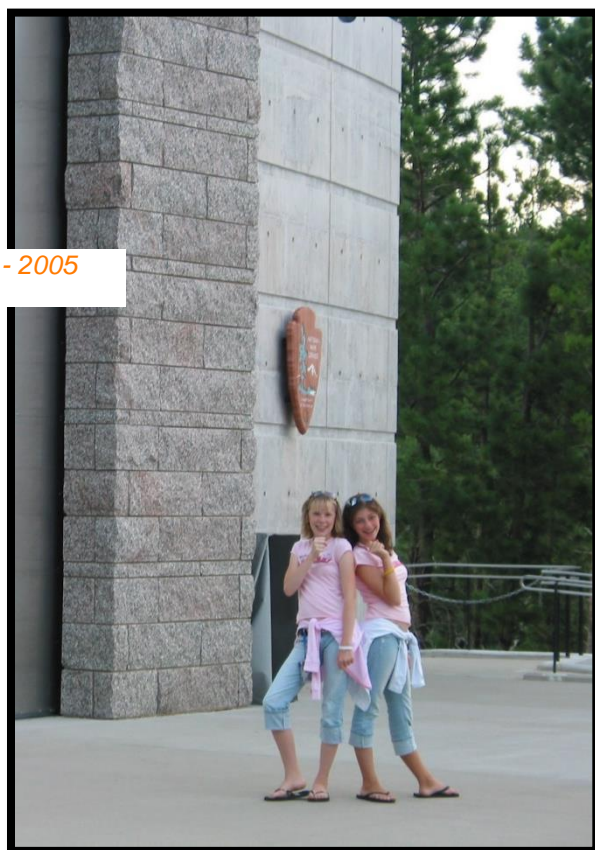
That's a first, a taxi clearance before I am on the ground.

Mother Nature reminded us of who is boss as we touched down. Lightening lit up the sky and thunder overwhelmed the sound of the engine. A micro-burst lifted us back off the ground and we burned up some runway settling back to earth. The fading radio unleashed a crackle that sent a tingle up my spine.

It will be fun to be back in Billings. I even look forward to a thunderstorm while we are there. This time, my retina won't be branded with the word...

.... VOLTS

*Marissa and Riley - Model Passengers (or, Passenger Models) - 2005*





# Lesser Lights

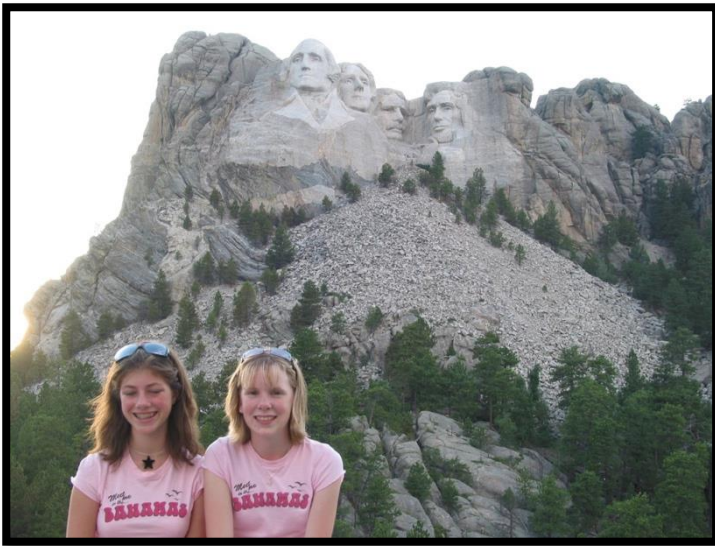
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July 31, 2005

Rapid City, South Dakota

I found alternator parts in Billings, and we were in the air again the next day.

♪ *Rapid City, Here We Come!* ♪



I took Shepherd cousins for rides in the plane while we were at the reunion. GSXS had a flat tire on landing on one circuit. No harm done, but by now I am sure you are all saying, “*I won’t be riding on Bucket of Bolts Air any time soon*”.

We will spend a night in the Rapid City area on the way to Iowa this summer. We probably won’t stop at Mount Rushmore this trip, but it really is worth a visit if you haven’t been there.

Riley, Marissa and four other ...

... lesser lights.

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Sometimes I pull a word or phrase out of the air, and I have no idea where it came from. *Lesser Lights* is that phrase today. I know it means people of less importance, but I didn’t know where the phrase originated or why it occurred to me to use it today.

I typed *lesser lights* into the *Google*; what popped up is a fascinating bit of trivia.

The phrase has a biblical origin, which is not surprising. Genesis 1-6: “*The greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night*”. The moon’s lesser light, and its importance relative to the sun, is the origin of the phrase.

But where it gets really interesting is what the Freemasons did with the term. In Freemasonry, a novice is a “lesser light”. Candidates for membership in the Masonic lodge are introduced in a ceremony where three candles, representing lesser lights, are arranged in a triangle. The candidate,

striving to ascend in the ranks of Freemasonry, is said to be drawn toward the greater light, toward enlightenment.

And that is just the start of the symbolism, I could fill ten pages with Masonic rituals relating to the ascent of...

... **Lesser Lights.**



# Piestengel

**June 1, 1855**  
**Iowa City, Iowa**

My brother Kevin and I share many idiosyncrasies, so I wasn't surprised when he said he thinks Iowa as a vacation destination is a good idea. In fact, Kevin has already been there.

One of the highlights of the Iowa trip for Kevin was visiting the Amana Colony, near Iowa City. The colony encompasses many of our common interests (farming, home-made food, antiques, history, plain living – that last one might be a stretch, but you get the picture).

The Amana are adherents of a German religious movement known as Pietists. Persecuted for their beliefs in their home country, the Amana emigrated to the US between 1830 and 1855. The industrious German settlers established agricultural colonies near Iowa City.



The colonies prospered in the century that followed. The Amana developed a tight-knit community, free of influence from the outside world. Their religious practices, farming methods, and social structures all developed in a microcosm. The Amana language also evolved in isolation, as a unique dialectic mix of High German and American English known as *Kolonie Deutsch*.

When the Great Depression hit in the early 1930's, the Amana made a prudent decision to convert farm woodworking shops into fabricating facilities, as a way to supplement their failing agricultural enterprise. They started building home appliances with their colony's name proudly displayed. *Amana* soon gained a reputation for quality products.

No colony member ever touched a drop of alcohol, but when prohibition ended and the need for refrigeration of beverages increased, the Amana enterprise dived into filling the need. Amana rode the refrigerator wave well into the 1940's, then converted their shops to making equipment for the



war effort. When the war ended Amana reverted to home-appliance manufacturing. Every post-war residence in America had an Amana appliance in its kitchen.

In the 1960's Amana again showed its adaptability by taking war-time technology and converting it to commercial purposes. Amana techs discovered that micro-wave technology, designed as a weapon, could cook your dinner. Amana manufactured and sold thousands of low-cost microwave ovens in the years that followed.

I totally agree with Kevin that a visit to the Amana colony is a “must” when we go on our American Midwest tour.

There is another piece of Amana lore that I am looking forward to. The Amana took the American word “pie” and combined it with the High German word for “rhubarb”. When we go to Iowa, I am going to bring back a gift for Kevin, a big slice of ....

... **Piestengel**



# Hmmmmm?

June 2021

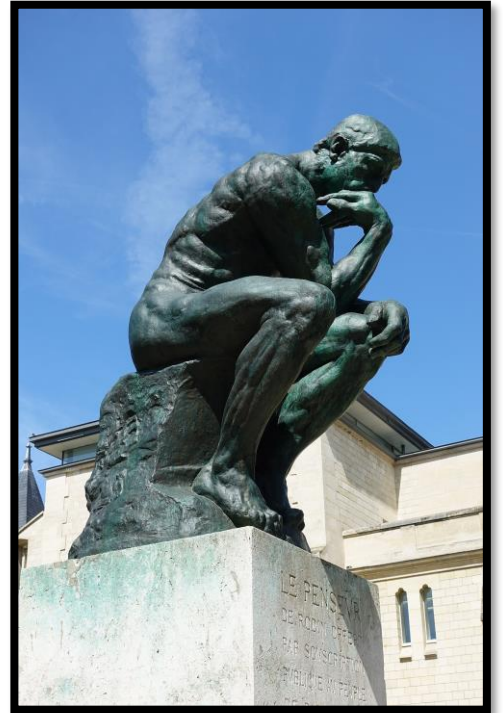
Kansas City, Missouri

*The Thinker* is a fixture outside the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City. He is perched on an elevated stone pedestal, turning green in his birthday suit, deep in thought.

A caption on the museum website asserts that the bronze sculpture, “depicts the poet Dante, reflecting on heaven, hell, and the fate of all humankind.” Dante has been pondering these topics since 1902, I wonder what he has come up with.

I was a little disappointed to learn that *The Thinker* in Missouri is just one of 28 replicas of Rodin’s original, which is permanently located in Paris. The Kansas City sculpture is not really “*The*” *Thinker*, so much as he is just “*A*” *Thinker*.

If *The Thinker* is a replica, maybe his thoughts aren’t as profound as the museum website claims. Here are a few alternate interpretations of what this version of Dante might be contemplating:



*I wonder, does Rodin even know how cold it gets in Kansas City in winter?*

*Is that Amana dryer ever going to stop tumbling, so I can get my clothes back?*

*Do you know what I am not thinking about? Pigeons! I hate pigeons.*

... Hmmmmm?

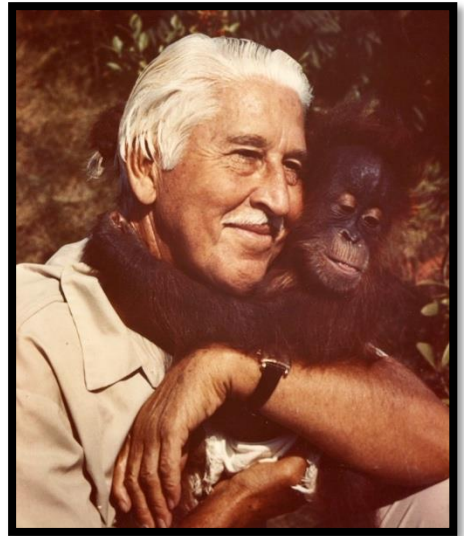
# Omaha

Sunday July 9, 1967  
Omaha, Nebraska

If I have a travel bug, these two share much of the blame.

Every Sunday afternoon in the 1960's and 70's, Marlin Perkins hosted a half-hour nature documentary TV show entitled, *Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom*. Perkins and other naturalists traveled the world filming and observing animals in the wild. They brought fascinating creatures and distant locales into our living room, and I seldom missed an episode.

As a kid, growing up on a farm in Saskatchewan, my most exotic travel destination was Brandon, Manitoba. The world of Marlin Perkins and *Wild Kingdom* seemed like a dream. I wanted to be one of Perkins naturalists. In fact, I was so enthralled with the prospect of travel as a kid, I would have gladly traded places with his chimpanzee co-host, "W.K".



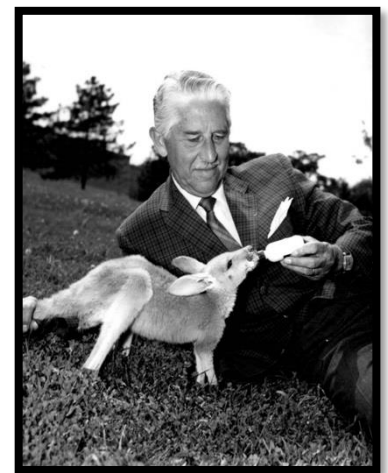
Even the television show's title invoked wonder. Omaha, I had no idea where it was. Nebraska could have been on the dark side of the moon for all I knew, and I had as much chance of going there as traveling in space.



As an adult I have followed up on some of the *Wild Kingdom*-induced dreams. I still haven't wrestled an Anaconda in the Amazon, been chased by an African elephant, or bottle-fed a kangaroo but, if all goes well this summer, I may finally make it to

....

... Omaha





# No Comment

June 2021  
Central Time Zone

Sometimes, a talent comes along that needs ....

....no comment

<https://youtu.be/GMNMyNjwZ60>



# In Cold Blood

November 15, 1959

Holcomb, Kansas



*“I didn’t want to harm the man. I thought he was a very nice gentleman. Soft-spoken. I thought so right up to the moment I cut his throat”.*

It is difficult to imagine a connection between the quotation above and the picture on the left. That dichotomy is what makes *In Cold Blood* such a compelling story.

In the early hours of November 15, 1959, two recently released prisoners hatched a scheme to rob a Holcomb, Kansas farm family, in the mistaken belief that the Clutter’s kept a large amount of cash on hand.

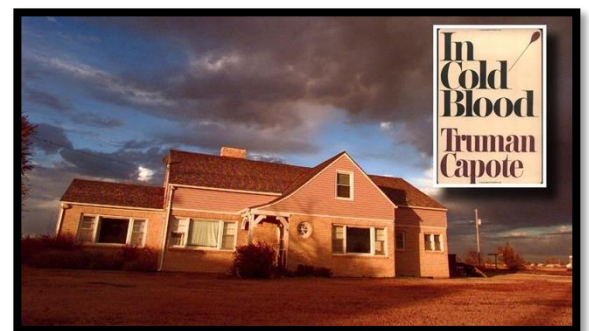
Perry Smith, the author of the quote above, and Richard Hickock entered the Clutter house in the middle of the night and demanded money. When Herbert Clutter confessed that they only had a small amount of cash on hand the criminal pair became enraged. Smith slit Herbert Clutter’s throat, then killed his two children and Clutter’s wife Bonnie Mae with a shotgun.

Smith and Hickock got approximately \$50, a transistor radio, and a pair of binoculars for their trouble.

Truman Capote’s book, and a movie of the same name, are the ultimate true crime story. A peaceful, salt-of-the-earth family, in a life and death encounter with the lowest form of human depravity.

I think we will give Holcomb, Kansas a miss on our Midwest tour. I have little desire to visit a place covered...

.... In Cold Blood



# Toto

June 13, 1939

Oz

I don't want to end our tour of the American Midwest on a down note. Considering the fact that we haven't left home yet, it shouldn't be an issue.

We have covered a lot of ground on this armchair adventure, and I am happy you were able to join us. When we make the road trip south, I will let you know if the physical experience matches the theoretical.

Or you could join us, keep that *Field of Dreams* event in mind.

Before we head home, I want to take one more side trip. If you will please step to the right, we will be on our way.



And, just like that, we aren't in Kansas anymore, ....

..... Toto

**“.... be it ever so humble, there is no place like home”. – Judy Garland**



**To be continued .....**