

Biker Information Guide

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“Biker Billy Cooks with Fire”



Roads Run Through It

My cell phone rang the other day, a rather common occurrence. The caller ID showed a non-local number; this is also rather common. My work brings me calls from all over the country. But this was an uncommon and sad call—it was my aunt Joyce telling me that my aunt Devota had died. She had fallen and broken her femur just above the knee, and during the surgery to stabilize the break she had had a heart attack, and then another post-op. It was the second one that took her. Devota was over 89 years old; she had lived a good long life and had lived it well. Although in recent years I hadn't seen her often, I will miss her dearly. Joyce is now the last survivor of almost 20 aunts and uncles. In another way, though, Devota's passing marks the end of an era

She was my late mother's closest sister, in both age and life's journey. She was also the last fellow traveler from the days of my childhood. It was with her and her husband, Uncle Bunk, that Mom and I took the summer road trips that in so many ways shaped my life. Back in those days we traveled together to Mamaw's place in the mountains of eastern Tennessee. Mom would drive us down from New Jersey along Interstate 95 to Baltimore where Bunk and Devota lived. We would spend the night at their house and make ready for the journey the next day. That was always an evening of excitement and anticipation. At dawn we would be off along a route that varied some each year—there would be new things to see, places to stop and eat, souvenir shops to explore, motels with pools to swim in, and at the end of two or three days of traveling, Mamaw's place awaited us. These were the road trips that instilled the wanderlust and love of the road that shaped who I am.

It was too late for me to get an affordable flight to Baltimore so I would have to drive from my North Carolina home to Baltimore. I could only be gone for two days—just enough to drive up, attend the evening viewing and the next morning's funeral, then drive back again. Since this was late January with a winter storm moving east through Ohio, riding back-to-back 500-mile days would not be too wise. I rented a car, mapquested the route to the funeral parlor, and set out for Baltimore.

The computer-generated route took me north over the mountains into Tennessee and along Interstate 81 to Winchester, Virginia, then east through Harpers Ferry, along Interstate 70 onto the 695 beltway, and finally into the part of Baltimore where Bunk and Devota had lived for so many years. A thousand miles of driving, even filled with an iPod's worth of music, gives one a lot of time to reflect. As I drove north along I-81, the many place names and route numbers on the exit

signs and the billboards took me back in time. I was traveling in reverse order much the same route that Devota, Bunk, Mom, and I had made so many times during my childhood.

Together we had traveled the many roads that traverse this part of the country. From the Blue Ridge Parkway on top of the mountains, down to the valley floor along US Route 11 (in places still called "The Lee Highway"), and along the many other roads that crisscross between the old-time tourist attractions. When I was little we traveled them all. Then came the new road, I-81 and we traveled that, too. As the years rolled by we took those trips less often.

After I had grown and started to take motorcycle vacations, I often rode down and back on the Blue Ridge Parkway, a personal favorite escape from my NYC life then. Close to a decade ago, when I moved here to North Carolina, I drove the big moving truck south on I-81 through the Shenandoah Valley, which since has become my roadway of choice when I drive to and from the northeast.

In so many ways, the roads up and down those mountains and through that valley are the roads that run through my life. As I drove home from the funeral with pictures of Devota, Bunk, and Mamaw on the front passenger seat, I came to understand that these are the roadways of my life. While Mamaw and the family aren't waiting in the hills for our visit, Mom, Devota, and Bunk have all joined her in a far better place. I will always have them traveling with me in my heart till this narrow winding road leads me home to join them.

Mexi-Corn

The crisp medley of fresh peppers and sweet corn kernels will complement any meal. And the colorful combination of red, yellow and green will remind you of traffic lights and the fact that you need to go riding.

2 tablespoons salted butter

1 small red bell pepper, cored and coarsely chopped

1 fresh green Anaheim pepper, stemmed and coarsely chopped

1 fresh green jalapeno pepper, stemmed and coarsely chopped (optional)

1 (12-ounce) can whole kernel corn, drained

Salt and black pepper

In a small saucepan, melt the butter over medium heat. Combine the peppers in the saucepan and simmer for 2 to 3 minutes. Add the corn and stir well. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 3 to 5 minutes, stirring often to prevent burning. Season with salt and black pepper to taste and serve piping hot.

Makes 4 servings

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