

NEVER NEED TO LACK FOR BUSINESS WITH 50 MILLION PEOPLE ON WHEELS

Nearby States, Continue Building Roads to Get People Quicker to the North Carolina Coastland; We Only Have to Give 'Em Something For Their Money to Keep Business Booming on the Seashore.

By VICTOR MEEKINS

If we can't find 100 people with ten dollars each to spend, then we may obtain the same objective by getting 200 people with \$5 each to spend. There are plenty of people on wheels, judging from what I saw on a trip this month to Ohio, New York and other places. It looks like everybody in the country is on wheels, and going some place in a hurry.

In the northern states the race goes on to build more roads and faster roads, so everyone who wishes may get some place faster. Some of these express roads stretch a thousand miles or more across country, without a single cross road or traffic light to stop a fellow and he only has to stop to pay toll for using the roads. On these fast roads, destinations may be reached in half the usual time.

It looks like all we have to do is to advertise the advantages of the N. C. coast a little farther from home, and we will attract an increasing amount of business each year from all these people out on the roads.

In some 1,800 miles of travel I found courtesy and good service the rule. Nowhere did I run across discourtesy, nor prices that were out of line with those usually charged poor folks, other than in

New York City, and some of the places there are most reasonable. Anyone who stops at a good hotel, and stores his car for a couple of nights in New York, is going to have to pay out more than \$50 for three people. But that's no worse than they try to do at some other places, as we shall see.

The best view of Niagara Falls is from the Canadian side, which claims 94% of the Falls and its waters. We talked to a number of people over there about the tourist business. A friendly filling station attendant talked to me quite awhile the other Saturday afternoon on our short visit to Ontario, and it sounded just like somebody talking on Roanoke Island. He said:

"If you want to spend the night here, I can point out to you some high class tourist homes which will take you for \$2 a night per person, and they are just as good accommodations as you can get in any motel. Only yesterday I saw some tourists who said a motel had tried to hold 'em up for \$25 for a night's lodging for three people. I like to see folks stop over and be treated right, for it helps my business too," he said.

This man also mentioned that he knew just what parties to send the various homes he knew. He said there were places that didn't mind the young and noisy, while others preferred only the quiet type.

Similar to the U. S.

Generally speaking, there wasn't much difference apparent anywhere in that area. Food was just as high in a big Canadian supermarket, gasoline higher priced than in North Carolina, and they charged you four cents on the dollar to handle your American money. Naturally being just across the border, many of the people in business there are Americans.

The countryside, through which we took a considerable drive looking prosperous enough, and might have been most anywhere in the states, except for being more barren of tall trees. Houses rank with ours, but were designed more for winter use. There appeared to be night spots, beer joints, and juke box joints on the roadsides.

Some good newspapers come out of Toronto, and they are concerned about the same things we are, plus carrying advice as to how Uncle Sam ought to keep more of our NATO money closer home—in Canada. There was some concern over a beer strike which threatened to dry up the 12 and a half million pints a week necessary to keep wet the whistles of the people of Ontario. At one of the resorts in Alberta, a big black bear had snatched and killed a seven year old girl. A husband in Quebec had increased his wife's insurance by \$12,000 and two days later was accused of murdering her. In Quebec, thugs had slugged an auto dealer and stolen \$100,000 from him. The Nautilus had just made its historic voyage under the North Pole. A \$13 million expressway was being planned to ease traffic in one Canadian area.

And this brings us to the subject of expressways, thruways, turn-pikes, or whatever you choose to call them, which now makes it possible to get to distant places twice as fast, by paying a fee and by using a fourth more gas. We drove half of our 1,800 miles on these big super-roads with not a

cross roads in six hundred miles, and speeds allowed at 60 and 65 mph.

Naturally one gets quickly across the state, but the tourist misses many really interesting things. He doesn't see the quaint old towns, with their many historical attractions; he doesn't observe the diverse occupations and methods of living in a multitude of communities. I took the expressways out of curiosity and because the time I could be away from business was limited. But any other time I shall travel the leisurely routes which wind through the quaint and interesting countryside.

I thought of what the new turnpike had done, between Petersburg and Richmond. It has been open only a few weeks, at a cost of \$73 millions. There is no need to stop anywhere except to pay the toll which is 65 cents between Petersburg and the northside of Richmond. Instead of the usual one to one and a half hours along busy U. S. No. 1, with its 65 traffic lights, the trip can be made in some 40 minutes, or less. The road offers relaxed driving on a good surface for 34.7 miles.

This \$73 million dollar expressway helps to get tourists through towns faster than ever, but it also does something else. It takes business from the dozens of modern motels on No. 1. between Petersburg and Richmond. No doubt many of them will be forced out of business; in effect their property will be confiscated through depreciation in value. Perhaps the losses along the old road will equal the cost of the new expressway.

Pa. Turnpike Oldest of All

For about the fourth time, I travelled on the Pennsylvania turnpike, which I rode on first about 20 years ago when it was newly built. This road sprawls for 470 miles across the state from the Delaware River and the New Jersey Turnpike to the Ohio line, and for about one cent per mile it may be used. It goes through seven tunnels under mountain peaks and continues another 397 miles across northern Ohio and Indiana to Chicago.

To police this 470 miles of Pennsylvania turnpike, the State employs 159 men, and spends \$100,000 a month. Of course there are hundreds of other employees on this highway, including ticket takers, mowers of grass, maintenance men, etc. Of the entire distance driven along this route we saw only one officer in evidence and he appeared to be giving information to a tourist, yet the top speed limit is 65 miles per hour.

After a short visit in northwestern Ohio, we spent the night in western Pennsylvania near Erie, and there we got on the New York Thruway, which continues 500 miles to New York City. We took off at Buffalo, went over into Ontario for an afternoon of sight-seeing. Then we returned to the fast toll road, and continued our trip, stopping overnight in Syracuse, a town of 250,000 and the state's fourth largest city.

We arrived in New York City on Sunday afternoon, where we spent two nights and left early on Tuesday morning, driving home via the New Jersey Turnpike, some 120 miles, and the Chesapeake Bay ferry, some 420 miles all told to Manteo. In all we rode about 1,800 miles. In New York we saw two good shows and paid double prices for food and lodging. As for the turnpikes, one usually pays more for food and lodging on these also. We noted that food has always been in the hands of one large caterer on the Pennsylvania turnpike. Prices seemed higher than most other places, and the service seemed a little crowded. On the

New York Thruway, we found restaurants operated by three different caterers, and prices and quality seemed better for the tourist.

Our worst food was found on the ferry steamer across to Little Creek. We had looked forward to this trip, and due to having used air travel much in recent years, it had been about four years since I had travelled on route 13.

There is something about getting a meal on the water, and eating while the sea and other ships go past outside, together with the appetizing stimulation of the salt air, that makes a meal seem better. Not so with this service on the Princess Anne. It was difficult to get service, the food was poor, the slow apparently was drenched with fish oil, and couldn't be eaten. I was disgusted and puzzled.

It now appears that the ferries are no longer operated by a private corporation. They are under public ownership, and operated by the state of Virginia. The concessions now are probably not closely supervised, thus does politics bring about a deterioration of public service.

A great many vessels appeared to be in use. We met four on this schedule, indicating that there are ample boats. The Princess Anne wasn't more than half loaded. This is the 26-mile span which is to get a tunnel and bridge to replace the boats sometime in the next two years.

In the seven states in which we travelled there live upwards of 50 million people. Millions of these people appear to be on wheels and looking for some place to go. Somebody appears to be trying to get them to wherever they are going, judging from the feverish haste with which new roads and faster roads have been built.

It seems that the best thing for us, is to get our story to these

people on wheels, and tell them what we have to offer them in the way of entertainment, easy, healthful, comfortable and inexpensive living.

Facts About Turnpikes

Some further comments on turnpikes might be of interest. It appears that they were for a time considered the answer to the motorist's problems, but not all of them are profitable. In Pennsylvania, the northeast extension of the road from Harrisburg to the Delaware River cost 171½ million dollars, for 110 miles, but not enough tourists have come along to make it pay off.

Since they began building the turnpikes 25 years ago, numerous parallel roads have been brought up to date, and these free roads appeal to the economy minded, as well as to those who wish to travel leisurely and view the points of interest in the old areas which abound in a wealth of history. Many well-informed people believe the hey-day of the toll road is nearing its end. There are some 39,000 miles of free roads to cost about \$28 billions to be completed in the next 15 years.

Some figures about the cost of toll roads may be interesting. There are about 3,000 miles of such roads in the United States that cost over five billion dollars, for which the states expect to pay, from tolls collected, usually at the rate of about 1½ cent per mile.

Construction costs on some of these roads have been as high as two million dollars per mile. There are seven tunnels bored through mountains on the Pennsylvania turnpike, one a mile long. An 88 mile road in West Virginia is costing \$133 millions. A turnpike being built in Connecticut was to have been built for \$130 million its promoters said, but is going to cost \$464 millions. Six thousand families have to be moved out of

the way. It will take in less than five million dollars in tolls this year, while the interest on the bonds will cost nearly \$13 millions. The state has to make up the difference.

The 241 miles of the Ohio turnpike cost \$326 millions; the extension which takes it on to Illinois, a distance of 156 miles cost on similar scale. See TRAVELS, Page Eight

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