

Travels with Charley by John Steinbeck (1962)

At age 58 he set off on a journey across America in truck with camper [named Rocinante after Don Quixote's horse] & his French poodle Charley. He covered 33 states in the fall of 1960 without disclosing who he was or being recognized. Starting in Sag Harbor, NY after a big storm in Sep the truck had too much load & eventually blew out a tire. He met a sailor on the ferry out from Long Island who told him in a storm the submarine could dive & everything was calm again.

It was sad to see cities with garbage around. He enjoyed fall colors & the Aurora Borealis in the White Mtns as he headed up to Maine for lobsters & potatoes. He met a dairy man in MA who was one of the few content men he met. He would stop at a motel or truck stop every few days for a shower. Some people would fill a room with energy & others drain it away. He used his cattle caller on his truck & a moose came so he had to drive off.

While growing up in Salinas, CA a friend of his placed antlers on sand bags in the forest & came back after hunting season to harvest the lead. A dark lonely night he heard footsteps in the gravel near his camper. He shined his flashlight in the man's eyes & asked "what do you want?" The man replied "I want to go home". He finds it is easy to meet people when he has a dog or child. He invited French Canuck laborers over for a drink & got to know them.

He saw a mobile home park in OH & thought it had merit [they must have been a novelty]. His wife flew out & met him in IL & TX. He thought WI & MT were beautiful & Bad Lands were deserving of their name [until the afternoon sun hit]. He was alone & isolated for 8 months near Lake Tahoe when he was young & it was extremely lonely. He met an old actor that performs at schools. His calm dog went ferocious around bears.

He was impressed by the giant redwoods in CA. He grew up with a black family that were respected, but in the south, they were hated. In New Orleans he witnessed evil women shouting the vilest words at innocent black children ushered to a white school by US Marshals. Most men resist change. He gave a ride to a man who wanted to kill some 'niggers' & kicked him out. He just wanted to get out of there & get home.

Books: The Spectator (Henry Morley); Rise & Fall of the Third Reich (Shirer); Heavenly Discourse (Charles Wood); You Can't Go Home Again (Tom Wolfe); Grapes of Wrath (JS); Of Mice & Men (JS)

Quotes: "A sad soul can kill you quicker, far quicker, than a germ" "In the war between reality & romance, reality is not the stronger." "At the roadsides I never had a really good dinner or a really bad breakfast." "He didn't like himself, & when that is so the subject usually must find an area for dislike outside himself. Else he would have to admit his self-contempt." (JS)

States he went through: NY, CT, MA, NH, ME, VT, OH, IN, IL, WI, ND, MT, ID, WA, OR, CA, AZ, NM, TX, LA, MS, AL, TN, VA, WV, MD, PA, NJ

Definitions:

- 6 - peripatetic = roving
- 7 - lithe = agile
- 7 - satiric = ridicule
- 21 - genoa = sail
- 21 - delphinium = buttercup [blue flower]
- 32 - reposeful = relaxed
- 33 - wayfaring = traveler on foot
- 33 - taciturnity = quiet
- 36 - looking-egg = egg shell with a picture inside
- 40 - bedizened = gaudy dress
- 45 - damask = red
- 48 - privet = shrub
- 51 - misanthropy = disdain
- 64 - windlass = winch
- 65 - buxom = plump
- 71 - yeomanry = farmers
- 72 - dehiscent = discharge
- 77 - sepulcher = tomb
- 78 - tawdry = cheap
- 89 - sough = moan
- 115 - Hollanderized = ?
- 123 - patinaed = polished
- 130 - Brunhild = beautiful princess
- 138 - subtleties = delicacy
- 154 - troglodytes = cave men
- 170 - slattern = untidy woman
- 172 - larder = store room
- 187 - devoirs = duty
- 187 - Galahad = a knight of King Arthur's round table
- 187 - pariah = recluse
- 193 - hame = collar
- 214 - desiccation = dryness
- 217 - pernicious = evil
- 220 - mullygrubs = depressed
- 247 - matriculation = enrollment
- 247- invectives = attacks
- 268 - facetiously = flippantly
- 274 - Pamplona = running of the bulls festival