

TRAVEL

Driving to Alaska an excellent trip

BY JEAN WYNN
SPECIAL WRITER

It is 4,102 miles from Livonia to the Alaska state line. I know because I drove it last summer, and it was the best travel experience of my life.

To get started, I bought a copy of *The Milepost* (Morris Communications Corp.) The book proved to be the most important step in carrying out my trip.

My driving route, 300 miles a day, took me across Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and northern North Dakota, then into Montana, in a northwesterly direction to Alberta, British Columbia, the Yukon and Alaska.

I took rain gear, bear spray, a buck knife, Coleman cooler, and cell phone, which didn't always work in the mountains, and three suitcases - winter clothes, summer clothes, plus a duffel bag containing toiletries and first aid items.

The Milepost covers every Alaskan highway mile, and the northern Canadian provinces, so the only other map I needed was a U.S. atlas - Rand McNally Road Atlas, Large Scale.

At 8:30 a.m. Aug. 21 I left Livonia and was in Illinois by lunchtime. I kept a journal, and photo log, and my days took on a comfortable rhythm as the Midwest gave way to the grandeur of the Plains states.

In northern Montana where farms and ranches are measured in miles rather than acres, I didn't see any people for long periods of time. Turning north at Shelby, Mont., into Glacier Park, and through the adjacent Waterton Glacier Park into Alberta, Canada, I was awed at by every turn in the landscape.

From Alberta northward, I relied on *The Milepost* for everything from maps and sightseeing trips to information about where to find gas, food and lodging. Services of any kind can be 60-70 or more miles apart in Alaska and the Yukon.

Wildlife

In the British Columbia I saw wildlife every day, including a black bear that appeared out of the woods and ran alongside my car briefly before disappearing into the brush. I saw moose, caribou, elk, bison, wolves, mountain sheep, and many species.



I've arrived: It was a lot of driving, 4,102 miles, but reaching the Alaska state line on Labor Day was a happy moment.

■ There were times of loneliness, fear and boredom during the 49 days I spent on the road, but the thrill of the trip made it worthwhile. No one sees Alaska the way people do who drive, and they never forget it.

tacular birds.

Mile "Zero" of the fabled Alaska Highway is in Dawson Creek, British Columbia. This 1,390 mile road, still sometimes called by its old name, The Alcan Highway, was built in 1942 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. After 14 days of driving, I arrived at the Alaska state line. Another road traveler from Au Train, Mich. snapped my picture at Delta Junction, I picked up the Richardson Highway and drove north 96 miles to Fairbanks.

From there I headed south on the George Parks Highway through the magnificent Alaska Range and stopped at Denali National Park. There, the highest peak in North America, Mt. McKinley, towers at over 20,000 feet and, on a clear day can be

seen from Fairbanks. It took my breath away.

I spent a few days further south in Anchorage, which is beautifully situated on the Cook Inlet and sheltered by three mountain ranges.

Anchorage has terrific restaurants of every type. My favorite was Simon and Seafort's where I had a lovely table overlooking the water. I ate fish wherever I went in Alaska and have never had anything as delicious as the native salmon and halibut.

Leaving Anchorage, I backtracked to Tok before heading south to Haines. There, I boarded a ferry on the Alaska Marine Highway system. With my vehicle stowed below deck, we traveled along the Inside Passage and made overnight stops in Juneau where you can drive almost to the foot of Mendenhall Glacier, 15,000 square miles of ice, Petersburg and Ketchikan.

It costs a fraction of what a cruise ship would cost and allows you to design your own itinerary. For my passage on the M.V. Columbia from Petersburg to Ketchikan I paid a supplement to my ticket and treated myself to a state room.

Heading home

At Prince Rupert, British Columbia, I drove off of my last

ferry and headed south through the Cascades and crossed the U.S. border at Sumas, Wash. On the way home I made a large loop down the Pacific coast, across the southwest, then northeast through Arkansas and Tennessee.

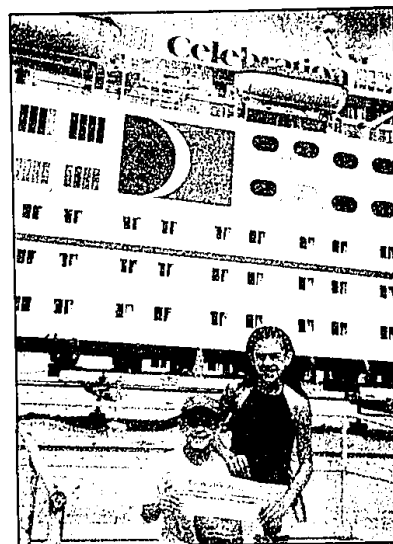
There were times of loneliness, fear and boredom during the 49 days I spent on the road, but the thrill of the trip made it worthwhile. No one sees Alaska the way people do who drive, and they never forget it.

A great advertisement for Excursion.com in *The Milepost* depicts a lone camper rounding a bend in the road, dwarfed by stupendous Alaskan peaks. The top of the ad says - "Don't just dream it - drive it."

I couldn't say it better.

Share your travel adventures with readers. Send stories and photos for consideration in the *Observer & Eccentric Newspapers* to Katelyn Kaleski Wygonik, Assistant Managing Editor Features, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150 or e-mail (send as a text file or copy and paste into e-mail, kwygonik@aec.homecomm.net). Enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope if you would like your photos returned to you.

Wish you were here



Cruising: Justin, 7 and Nicole 12, along with their grandparents Dr. and Mrs. Robert and Mignonne Legel of Livonia, enjoyed their winter break on a Caribbean cruise. Dr. Legel noted that there are many activities to keep both adults and children occupied. And, as always, great food. He also pointed out that there are good deals if you are available for them. He did not like the mandatory or "prepaid tipping policy."

Observer

Classifieds sell!

Call 800-579-SELL

today!

Make the MOST of your MONEY
FLAGSTAR
CD
Certificate of Deposit

3.50 % APY

24 - 35 months

4.35 % APY

36 - 47 months

4.75 % APY

48 - 59 months

5.00 % APY

60+ months

Open an IRA with a Flagstar Bank CD and make the most of your money!

Don't miss this great opportunity for Tax Savings. Contribute to your IRA no later than April 15, 2002.

FLAGSTAR
BANK

Convenience You Can Count On...

Convenient Sit-Down Banking At All Locations!

Call For Hours And A Banking Center

Near You:

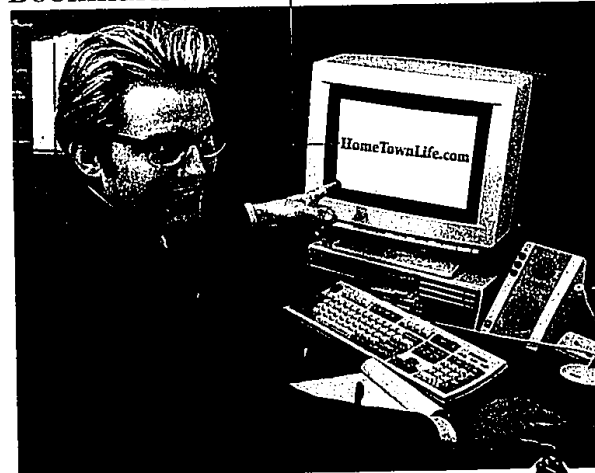
800-642-0039

www.flagstar.com

MEMBER FDIC

Annual Percentage Yield (APY) is effective as of 3/30/02. New retail accounts only with maximum deposit of \$100,000. Minimum opening balance requirement is \$500. Penalty may be imposed for early withdrawal. Quarterly compounding. Rates are effective for a limited time only and subject to change without notice. Certain restrictions do apply. Consult your tax advisor for restrictions regarding IRAs. FDIC 00000000

Bookmark this!



The next time you want to check your hometown classifieds, click

look up a phone number, click, buy a neat new house, click,

find a fun thing to do on the weekend, click, or read an online

summary of your Observer or Eccentric

newspaper, click

Your bookmark will get you

there fast.



HomeTownLife.com

Brought to you by The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers

110126



Sightseeing: Wynn stands in front of a totem pole on the University of Alaska campus in Fairbanks.

Questions about cancer do not go away at bedtime.

Neither do we.

For answers, information and support, call us anytime, day or night.



cancer.org
800-ACS-2345