

## DRIVING

We did a bit of driving this past weekend. We drove to Amherst and the Yiddish Book Center for two Klezmer concerts, did some sightseeing in the area, then to Deerfield, Greenfield, and Williamstown. I still like to drive, though I was not happy getting caught in heavy traffic on the Mass. Turnpike when we left, with cars bumper-to-bumper. David took the wheel for the sightseeing bit the next day. And I am no longer comfortable driving at night. But I still like to drive. I can not conceive of the time I will “have to give up the keys.”

In the “old days” before taking a trip, I would check my trusty AAA map, plot my route and go, referring to my map if I was unsure as we drove. (For long trips, I would get “Triptiks” and Tour Books from the AAA.) Today, I go to my computer, click on Mapquest and my trip is routed for me. I print the directions and off we go. And if I want to be like the man who wears a belt and suspenders, I go to my GPS and punch in my city and street and street number, and now I have a device that both shows me the way and talks to me as well.

Of course, sometimes I am given conflicting information, and I have even gotten wrong information from the GPS. But I just keep going, and the GPS recalculates and we get there. (“When possible, make a legal U turn.”) My current problem with my GPS is that I no longer have the holder affixed to my dash board, and I don’t charge the GPS anymore, so what I have is the instrument attached to a cord which is plugged into the car’s lighter, and it is propped up near the gearshift. I think I will put the holder back. And charge the GP before we go on another trip.

We left for Amherst on Saturday, July 19, having loaded the car and found a gas station which had gas at \$3.67. We had not planned to stop. I filled up our cooler with water and fruit and nosherei. However, with all the stop-and-go traffic, it took us much longer than I expected, so we stopped after two hours at a service center, used the “facilities,” got a bite, and got back into traffic. Thanks to the GPS, we arrived at our B and B going a way I would never have gone. David explained that it was a straight shot from our B and B to the Yiddish Book Center, on Pleasant Street, and it was. It also made the return trip in the dark, simple and easy, and I was perfectly comfortable.

Driving the next day was a breeze. We now knew the lay of the land. And it was Sunday afternoon that David took us on a trip around the area, and I felt good having him drive. Another aspect of driving these days, is parking as close as possible to where we have to go. I have a handicap placard and whenever we park, I hang it from our rear view mirror. It has become an automatic response: find a handicap spot or park close; turn off the ignition and remove the key (I forgot to do it once which created problems and concerns about Alzheimer’s); reach into the door pocket and remove and hang the placard.

Monday July 21, we said goodbye to David and Amherst, and were heading for Williamstown. I wisely programmed the GPS, using the address of our motel as our

destination. Again, remembering the old days, I would check the car's tires, water, oil, and window washer liquid. I do none of that these days. I can no longer bend down to use the tire gauge, and I had the oil changed about a month ago, and have faith that all the "liquids" are OK. Another difference between today and the old days: I drive slower. Cars pass me, and I don't mind a bit. When I am occasionally in the left lane, cars frequently get close to me, then move to the right lane, speed up and cut in front of me. They are clearly trying to tell me something. I move to the right lane. I leave the recommended one car length for every ten miles an hour that I am driving. It is seen as an invitation for cars to cut in. I am driving with my lights on in the daytime, which, in the old days I never did, thinking it would use up my lights and battery. It doesn't.

When we got close to Deerfield, I did stop at a gas station to inquire how to get to Historic Deerfield. There was no way that I could reprogram the GPS to find out. I was given excellent directions, we drove through this area that was worth seeing, especially since it was on our way, and then we drove, and drove and drove, through absolutely beautiful country, the Mohawk Trail. Our destination was the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, which had just opened (July 4) after a three year renovation. We fortunately had a motel close by. Williamstown isn't very big.

Since this is about driving, I am choosing not to go into detail about the Klezmer concerts, the Clark, or the Williams College Museum of Art which I visited the next day, except to say they were all fantastic. Which brings me to Tuesday morning, after my visit to the WCMA. I had planned that we would drive back to Boston, leisurely, along Route 2. But first, we would make a slight detour to drive to the summit of Mt. Greylock, the tallest mountain in Massachusetts at 3,491 feet. Another fantastic experience with great views and lots of hairpin turns. Again, the driving was easy, both ways, though faster coming down. When we got to the bottom, we realized that we did not have the time for a leisurely drive, so we reprogrammed the GPS for the fastest time, which meant that we had to zip down Route 7 to the Mass. Turnpike. The reason for the quick return was because Fran had a doctor's appointment. Fran drove the first part of the way, I took over for the remainder, and we made the appointment. When we returned, we noticed that gas prices had dropped about ten cents in the four days.

7-23-14

PS. Will send pictures, but not of the driving.