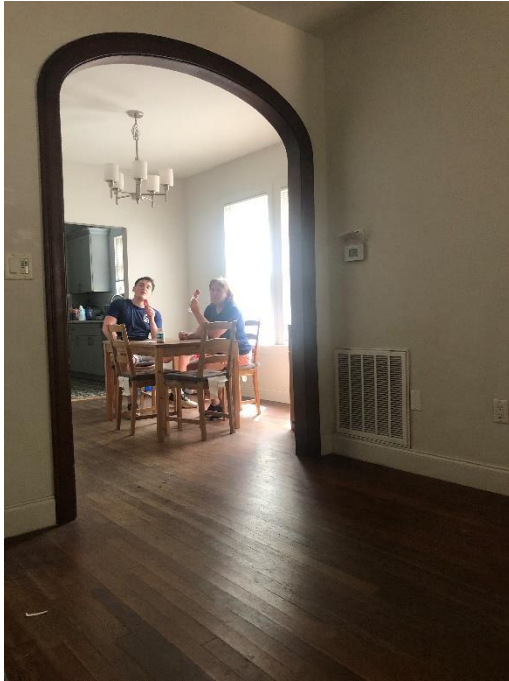


Austin, Texas Return Trip 2023

Jennifer and I just had a very enjoyable road trip driving back home with our son Spencer from Austin, Texas. He had just completed Law School at U Texas and is now relocating back to PA for work. We've always wanted to visit more of America and this was our chance. It's roughly a 25-hour drive back to the Philly area; we tried to drive 5 hours per day and make it a 4-night trip.



Here's the emptied-out apartment.

A couple months ago, Spencer bought a 2007 Chevy Colorado truck and he's made some minor mechanical fixes so that it's presentable and roadworthy. The truck drove really well. Much of the time we were driving above 75 mph (the standard speed limit for red states, apparently). Truth be told it handled very well up to 85 too, although when I drove, I generally stayed at 70 mph.

Here's the truck in our driveway upon our return. Noble beast.



I'm always amazed at both the consistency and diversity of our culture. We stayed at Marriott facilities that usually came with complimentary breakfast buffets. We dined with such an assortment of colorful characters one morning, I commented that along with half of everyone that looked generally like us, we were dining with an assortment of Homers, Snoop Dogs, Opies, and Great Khalis. That might sound pejorative but I wouldn't want to live in a country that didn't have this blend of sub cultures. Makes life more interesting. And we seem to get along well enough generally – if you skip the noisy outlier bad eggs.



That first day we stopped in Waco and toured the Chip and Joanna Gaines Magnolia Market. Jennifer loves the real estate shows where home designers jazz up old living spaces, and since it was right on the way, we couldn't pass it up. Also had a great lunch at Pivovar Czechan Brewery in Waco.



We had to pass up driving through Dallas because the timing would have put us there right in the middle of rush hour. So we missed seeing the square and grassy knoll where JFK was assassinated Nov 22, 1963. Everyone our generation remembers where we were when we first heard that our president had been shot. Instead, we drove on through to Texarkana, on the border with Arkansas. The one site we stopped at there was the Tower at Hot Springs, Arkansas. An elevator took us 216 feet to the top where there were spectacular views of the Ouachita Mountains.





We had to drive to and walk around Little Rock Central High School where integration took place early on in the 1960s. I remember segregationist “Bull Connor” who, using fire hoses and police dogs, had opposed black students from comingling with whites in Alabama at this time. Florida public schools were pretty good about teaching the civil rights movement.



From there we drove to Memphis, TN. Being Sunday, there was nothing open so we pushed on to Nashville, where we walked the Vanderbilt University campus.



Next, we stayed in Lexington, KY. It was named after Lexington, MA where the first battle of the Revolutionary War was fought. (Who knew?) We stayed at the Springhill Suites and what was unusual was that we had a view of the RedMile horse track from our hotel room window. (Cost us an extra \$8 for the view.)



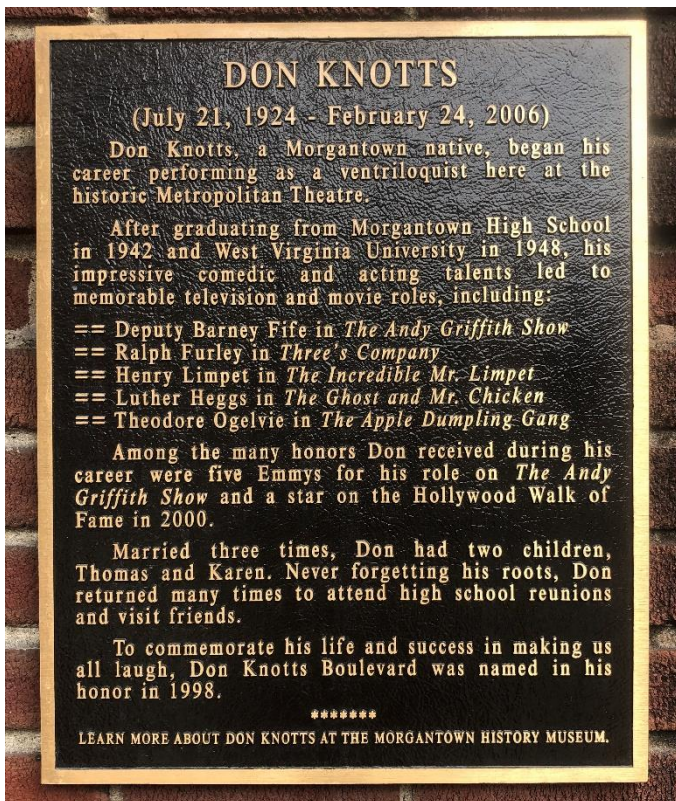
We walked a trail at McConnell Springs Park, Lexington, and stood under a 250+ year old bur oak tree.



We'd go on to have a fine lunch at Stella's Kentucky Deli.



From Kentucky, we made our last stop at Morgantown, WV before home in Media PA. We would visit the Don Knotts Statue and drive around the University of West Virginia.



And we would walk around the beautiful Coopers Rock State Forest Nature Preserve.



Finally back home. Of course, the next day and as early as possible, we picked up good old Barkley from the Kennel. He's a happy boy to be back home.

