

Surviving to Tell the Tale of the Tail

Several years ago, my wife and I went to the Smoky Mountains for a little vacation. This was before we had kids, I think... or perhaps we only had our youngest (so she would have been maybe 2 years old)... I don't quite remember. Anyway, on the way to Gatlinburg, Tennessee, we took a little detour to see some scenery.

We drove for several miles enjoying the views, and finally it occurred to me that I needed to go to the bathroom. I mean, I really needed to go! But there were several cars around and no good place to pull over. So, we said, when we get to the next store or restaurant (or opportunity), we will stop. We drove on... and on... and on... Finally the scenic road we were on Tee'd into another road. I didn't really know where we were -- we had been looking at scenery and not really paying attention to the map -- so I just picked a direction. We turned left.

Well, for a guy who had to go to the bathroom, this was a big mistake. I was to the point of needing to just pull over to the side of the road and get behind the nearest bush -- but on this road, there was NOWHERE to pull over! NOWHERE I TELL YOU!!! It was sheer torture! I have never seen so many curves on a stretch of highway... back and forth... forth and back... hairpin curves... curves where you loop 360 degrees and wave to yourself... big curves... little curves... medium sized curves... and even more curves... Not only did I need to go to the bathroom, now I was almost feeling carsick. I thought I was going to die!

Another really odd thing about this road -- motorcycles were appearing from every direction! They were everywhere! They were behind us, in front of us, passing us, meeting us, zipping here and there... "What in the world have we gotten ourselves into?"... I remember us asking that question a few times to no one in particular. Had I not been dying, this would have been an enjoyable and interesting drive!

Well, finally, we wobbled into a little store that was at the end of this tortuous series of curves. I was beyond death by now. As I nearly crawled into the store (which incidentally was surrounded by more motorcycles), I noticed some T-shirts hanging on a rack just inside the door... and the shirts had a map of the highway we had just traveled... and they said: "I Survived the Tail of the Dragon at Deals Gap!"

Been there, done that, but I didn't get the T-shirt. You know, now I wished I had! Little did I know we had just done 318 curves over the past 11 miles!

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