

All the way to

# you-know-where

and back again



Even though you start out with the best intentions and well-laid plans, you someday take a road trip that turns bad. Mine usually have involved vehicles that never made it to our destination: the VW Bus whose engine I lovingly rebuilt in my kitchen threw a rod on the highway headed to Montreal (sold to the mechanic nearest the exit ramp), the two-stroke Saab wagon I rebuilt entirely in Roger Harris' yard fell apart on our way to Paul Gibson's repair shop (never made it out of there), and the old blue Dodge wagon called "Kronkite" made it down the old woods road but couldn't get us out (probably still there).

Here are some of your winning road trip horror stories.

—Michael E.C. Gery

## The so-called flat tire

My daddy is 93 and still tells this story. Of course he tells it better than I can.

I was 18 months old, my mother was seven months pregnant, and we were coming home in a white 1954 Ford with a blue roof. We had been on a Christmas visit to the grandparents nearly 500 miles away.

It was raining, and I had been sick. In those days before child safety seats, my mother had me lying down on the front seat with my head in her lap. I had thrown up so many times she finally just laid a towel over her maternity dress for me to lay my face on.

We were already back in our home county, only a few miles from home, when a tire went flat. Daddy got out to change it in the dark while Mama and I

stayed in the car. When he got done and started to drive on, they knew right away something was wrong. Daddy was asking himself, "How could we possibly have another flat tire?"

Well, we didn't. In the dark, in the rain, he had changed the wrong tire.

*Dana Sanderson Holden  
Boone, Blue Ridge Electric*

## First a semi, then a cow

We had just purchased our first used travel trailer and took a week's vacation traveling to the Outer Banks from our home in western North Carolina. My wife and son were with me.

We spent time fishing, walking along the beaches and swimming. We savored every moment and left late Saturday

afternoon for the 8-hour trip home. Being exhausted from "vacation," I asked my wife to drive so I could take a nap. An 18-wheeler passed us and the suction of the semi started our rig to fishtailing. My seat belt kept me from reaching the electric brake, and my wife did not know what to depress. We jacked-knifed and the trailer rolled over. We were not injured, and fortunately, our truck remained upright.

It took two wreckers to upright the trailer, and we continued west. We made it to Deep Gap about midnight. Blinded by an oncoming car, a cow ran out in front of us and we collided with the cow. With a damaged travel trailer and truck, we limped home, arriving at 2 a.m. Whew!

*Jack L. Bryant  
Dallas, Rutherford EMC*

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Thanks to everyone who sent in stories. You can see more on our Web site. Next month we'll run your "Safety Lessons: Accidents and mishaps that taught you a safety lesson." [Deadline was March 15.] See the remaining themes and rules of our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series on page 23.



## Bus wreck

It was 1999 and I was in 8th grade along with my twin brother. We were on our way to Raleigh to meet the governor of North Carolina, Jim Hunt.

There were a total of four charter busses that were taking us there. I was on the last bus, while my brother was on the third bus. After about an hour down the road, our bus suddenly pulled off of the road. I had no idea what was going on, then I noticed that the third bus had crashed into the second bus. There was also no sign of the first bus.

I eventually found out that the first bus had no idea what had happened and ended up all the way in Raleigh.

A car had swerved in between the two buses, and the driver of the third bus lost control, causing the accident. A lot of kids had to go to the hospital with missing teeth and broken bones. I had that “twin feeling” that my brother was one of them. Sure enough he was hurt the worst of anyone (on a stretcher in photo above). He ended up breaking his mandible, which is the bone that holds your teeth.

He eventually recovered and about two months later we made it back to see the governor.

*Brent Wagner*  
*Lexington, EnergyUnited*

## Asking for directions

At 17 years old I had never driven any further than Charlotte, only 30 miles from where we lived. A good friend of mine had moved to Florida, and I wanted to see her. I did not know how to read a map, so I decided to stop at a service station and ask the attendant for help. Did he ever!

He marked the map for me. I did not know any better, so I took off.

I drove and drove, and it was starting to get dark. I stopped at another service station to see how much farther I had to go. The man told me I was in Johnson City, Tenn. He told me I had to go back. I had been driving for almost five hours in the wrong direction.

He told me the guy that had fixed my map up for me had played a dirty joke on me. He had sent me the wrong way as a joke. I did not find it a bit funny.

I did not have any extra money to get a place to sleep for the night, and I was so sleepy. The service station owner was real nice. He told me to pull my car into one of the bays, and he locked me in so I could have a safe place to sleep for the night. The next morning he fixed me up a new map and even brought me breakfast. Then I was on my way to Florida. I actually made it there this time.

*Debra Trull*  
*Stanfield, Union Power*



*Left to right: Siblings Wayne with his dump truck, Cara, Gay and Laura in Plant City.*

## “I want my beach ball!”

In July 1957 our family of six set out in our 1956 Pontiac to visit relatives in Plant City, Fla. As the sun came up we left with our food and drinks packed. We drove south on Hwy. 301, a two-lane road that was the main route from North Carolina to Florida at that time. Our windows were rolled down since air conditioning was quite a luxury back then.

About an hour into the trip my little brother, Wayne, discovered that he had left his beach ball at home. “I want my beach ball!” he cried.

We explained what wonderful things we could see and do in Florida, but he still wanted his beach ball. We counted cows, sang songs and told stories to pacify him. We passed him from the back to the front seat many times. (This was before

seat belts and child seats.) Every time the conversation lagged even a little bit Wayne would start again, “I want my beach ball!”

Daddy was not one to stop when he set out on a trip, so we only made stops for gas and necessities as the day got hotter and Wayne’s cries of “I want my beach ball!” intensified. Daddy finally promised Wayne that he would buy him a beach ball as soon as we got to Florida.

That hot July trip seemed to go on forever, but by 10 p.m. we were greeting Uncle Dan and Aunt Eva.

The next morning the whole family went with Wayne to pick out his new beach ball. We were all totally dismayed when he decided to get a dump truck instead.

*Gay C. Creech*  
*Linden, South River EMC*

## Back to Bath: the long way

During a 1969 vacation, Kent, our children Rod and Penny and I were traveling from Asheville to Manassas when it began raining heavily. On Hwy. 29 we saw an 18-wheeler stalled in water. We stopped as soon as possible and spent the night in the car as it continued to rain all night.

By sunrise the rain had stopped and we discovered we were in Lovingston, Va. The Highway Patrol informed us the highway was washed out between every mountain for miles. The 18-wheeler we had seen was washed a mile down the gorge. The rain was the aftermath of Hurricane Camille.

By afternoon, helicopter search, rescue and recovery operations began as many homes were washed away by mudslides. Morgues were set up in local churches. Kent knew helicopter hand signals from a tour of duty in the Army and helped with landings and take-offs.

We spent the second night with a local family.

The next day, Rod, Penny and I were airlifted by helicopter to Charlottesville and interviewed by a television reporter regarding the disaster.

The third day Kent was allowed to drive out on an emergency-only back road.

The fourth day we headed home to Bath, thanking God for our safety.

*Betty B. Gurganus*  
*Bath, Tideland EMC*



Seven-year-old Courtney

## Car sick

On Oct. 17, 2003, my husband, two daughters and I headed to Disney World. That morning, Courtney, then age 7, was so excited that she couldn't eat. Thirty minutes after we left, we had to pull over for her to throw up. She was sick all day.

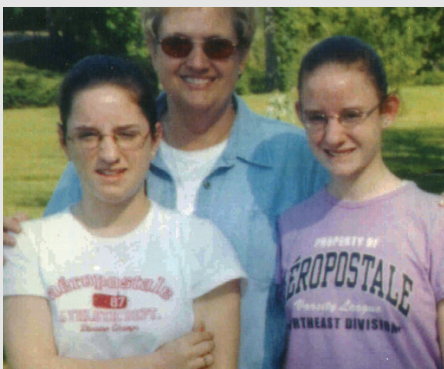
We stopped to eat lunch, and I made her eat a few bites. Bad idea. Thirty minutes later she was throwing up all over our SUV. The worst part was that we had to pull over onto a median in the middle of a freeway. I tried to clean her up as best I could. A trooper pulled up behind us and quickly jumped back into his car after I explained what was wrong.

On the return trip, we spent three nights at Tybee Island, Ga. My daughter Jessica, then age 12, threw up in the car. Luckily, she had a plastic bag. It was about 9 p.m., and we were lost. I had one nauseated kid and the younger one was beginning to cry uncontrollably.

It was a rough vacation, but we had a wonderful time outside of the vehicle!

Connie Beaver

Murphy, Blue Ridge Mountain EMC



Left to right: Emily, Libby and Abby

## So much for Disney World

Several years ago when our nieces were 7 and 10, my wife, Libby, decided to treat

them to a Florida vacation. The itinerary she planned would have thrilled any child—Disney World, Sea World, Universal Studios and a few days at the beach.

Nothing went right.

From the first day at a theme park, Emily got sick on the rides. Abby didn't care to wait in the long lines and wanted only to go back to the hotel to swim. And the hotel had limited TV channels.

So we went to the beach. Big mistake.

Not long after they waded into the surf, Abby felt something swim between her legs. Fearing the worst, she jumped into a nearby stranger's arms.

The final straw came when Libby spread out her picnic lunch. Within moments a flock of seagulls swooped down, frightening both girls into a panic. "It was like that Alfred Hitchcock movie," Libby says now, laughing.

Very soon the three were safe in the car. They looked at each other and said simultaneously, "Let's go home!"

Frank L. Duracher

Duluth, Ga., Haywood EMC

## Manhunt

My daughter, granddaughter and I were driving home in Union County. Several police cars passed us as we approached Hwy. 218. We tried to head straight across, but before we could turn there were police everywhere running towards the woods and the road. Suddenly, a police officer jumped in our car, shoved my daughter over on me and spun the car around. We were going fast.

I said, "Slow down, there is a curve and a bridge!"

He said, "Calm down, lady. I have everything under control."

Just as we passed the bridge, gun shots came from the left. He stopped the car, grabbed his pistol, thanked us and ran to the left. We were in the middle of the road.

My daughter said, "Which way?"

I said, "I don't know, but let's get out of Dodge!"

They captured a boy on a bicycle who had robbed a house. We were talking about the situation, and my granddaughter who was very calm in the back seat spoke up: "Oh this was an adventure, great for show and tell."

Christine Turner

Indian Trail, Union Power

# Send us your best Earn \$50

Here are the themes in our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series. Send us your stories and pictures about these themes. If yours is chosen for publication, we'll send you \$50. You don't have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

### June 2005

#### On the Farm

The best things about growing up or living on a farm.

Deadline: April 15

### July 2005

#### The First Meal I Ever Made

What was it and how did you like it?

Deadline: May 15

### August 2005

#### What I Learned From My Kids

Sometimes children can teach grown-ups a thing or two.

Deadline: June 15

### September 2005

#### Celebrity Look-alikes

Photos of people who are dead-ringers for someone famous. Digital ones must be 300 dpi and at least 4 by 6 inches.

Deadline: July 15



### October 2005

#### My Favorite Photo

North Carolina people, places, things. Digital ones must be 300 dpi and at least 4 by 6 inches.

Deadline: August 15

### November 2005

#### It's the Thought That Counts

The dumbest gift you ever received.

Deadline: Sept. 15

### December 2005

#### Holiday Mishaps

Those holiday plans that just didn't work out as you hoped they would.

Deadline: Oct. 15

### The Rules

1. Approximately 200 words or less.
2. Only one entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos must be 300 dpi and actual size.
4. E-mailed or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
7. We pay \$50 for each submission published. We retain reprint rights.
8. We will post on our Web site more entries than we publish, but can't pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don't agree to this.)
9. Send to: Nothing Finer, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27616  
Or by e-mail: carolina.country@ncemcs.com  
Or through the Web: www.carolinacountry.com