

Rick And Susie Went To The Gap!

by Rick Booe

For two years we have been wanting to go "Do the Dragon". Finally, last September, with both kids gone, Lisa off to college at the University of Southern Indiana and Andy now a new Lt. in the Air Force in Florida, we decided to drop everything and go to Deal's Gap. We packed up the Miata for our trip and headed down the highway.

We got a set of nice maps from AAA with three variations, the shortest route, the quickest route, and the scenic route. We ended up using different parts for the trip. We traveled some Interstate to save time and some scenic routes to relax and enjoy the trip. We like to stop and look at the sights of the small towns we go through, smell the roses style of traveling, and try their food. We've found that you meet the nicest people in the little towns of Kentucky, Tennessee and North Carolina. As we were going south out of Knoxville, it was getting late, but we wanted to make it to Fontana that first night. We had reserved a cabin at Fontana Village, which is only eight miles past the Gap. It was almost dark when we headed out of Maryville on Highway 411 and then we



turned on to US 129 south. It was soon very dark and the farther we went, the curvier the road got. I was driving as

fast as I could without Susie saying "Slow down! It's dark!".

We started to wonder if we would ever get there and then Susie yelled, "Look! A bear!". A small black bear ran across the road right in front of us and jumped into the woods and out of sight. I didn't get as good a look at it as Susie did, as I was concentrating on staying on the road, not what was right in front of me in the road! We had been talking about what a fun road this was and how could the Dragon be any better than this? We didn't know we were already on the Dragon!

Fontana Village Resort is east of Deal's Gap on Highway 28. We rented a two bedroom cabin that was wonderful for \$99 a day. Full kitchen, with dishes, living room, cable TV, two bedrooms, a very nice large bathroom, and no phone. Two couples could easily share a cabin. There was a wonderful front porch with two old time rocking chairs. The Village also has indoor and outdoor pools, an exercise room, video store, country store, and very nice restaurant. There are trails to walk through the woods and I was stung by bees three times, so next time, no walking the trails for me. Also, no phone and that includes cell phones. No coverage there!

The driving was the best part and we drove the Dragon at least six times. It's hard to take turns driving, we both had so much fun. Well, except when you come up on the occasional minivan or SUV looking at the sights at 10mph. We also drove on the Cherokee Skyway and parts of the Blue Ridge Parkway. Even Highway 28 from the Dragon to Fontana Village was a fun road. I don't think that part of the country has any straight roads, it's kinda like Miata heaven.

We decided to head for home a day early to get away from some bad weather that was on the way and to give us time to drive through Smokey Mountain National Park. The views there are wonderful, too. We spent a little time in Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge. It was tough to get on the Interstate after all that driving fun, but we wanted to visit some friends in Nashville, TN and be back home by Sunday.

If you haven't been there, don't put it off, it's the best driving you can imagine. The Tail of the Dragon is the road that Miatas were made for. If you really want to jump in, check out <http://www.miata.net> under events for "Miatas at the Gap" in July. It's the unofficial annual Miata gathering that attracts anywhere from 200 to 400 cars every year. I bet Susie and I will be there. It should be great.

AF Museum Tour A High Flying Event

IMC members braved the cold and dark and headed over to Dayton to visit the world's largest Military Aviation Museum on February 19th. Unfortunately, tour leaders Rick and Sara became navigational impaired and were driving in circles until Mike Selvy and Bern Baca, zoomed to the front of the pack, and led us to Wright Patterson Air Force Base.

Once we arrived, members fanned out to inspect the flying machines up close. Some signed up for the tour over to the R & D and Air Force One hangers, some went to the IMAX theatre and viewed a great movie on fighter pilot training, and everyone saw planes, lots of planes.

Rick Booe, our VP and former Air Force crew chief, showed some of us how to arm nuclear bombs (always handy information) and which planes that he worked on and was a crew chief for (SR-71 and F-111).

Inside a B-29, Todd Johnson and Membership Director Craig Johnson are the "Brothers in Arms"!



Photo by John Schaub