

STEPPING OFF THE EDGE

travels of a reluctant retiree

MAY 2, 2021 BY MIKE T

Boudin Balls, Cold Days, and Beware the “Cozy Cottage”...

Well, it was with a heavy heart we leave New Orleans, but perhaps Shreveport LA will be a welcome secluded rest stop, not to mention a much needed withdrawal from fried food. When we mentioned to the locals that our next stop was Shreveport, they often developed an uncomfortable look accompanied by, “Oh yes, I suppose that is a nice spot.” Beware!

Now it should be noted that like our home state of California, we grew fond of New Orleans to the point of home shopping, albeit in a casual way. Shreveport? How can I put this in terms you can relate to... you know how nice California is? Well, think Stockton.... I will say no more. Well perhaps a bit more...



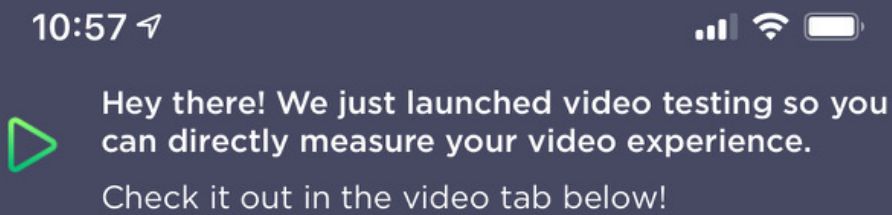
Above is the view from our little island cabin just outside of the city of Shreveport. Would have been ideal if not for the 40 and 50 degree temperatures. Plenty of water sport toys

were at our disposal and yet the 45 degree temperature did not exactly beckon us to go out onto the water. And there were the other views which makes one get that eerie Deliverance feeling...





Yes, and the walks through the neighborhood were no more comforting. Let's just say, the confederate flag is proudly displayed in northern Louisiana.



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let us not forget what passes for network speeds in LA

Highpoint of the journey from NOLA to Shreveport? Well, traveling through Cajon country with all its beautiful views, but none more beautiful than the site of BILLY'S BOUDIN! Yes, as we were told, it is the motherload of that Louisiana favorite, boudin sausage. It is made with rice, pork, chicken livers and pretty much anything else left from butchering a hog on the farm. But nevermind that (and this was ingredient information that was not welcomed by Mrs. T) this stuff is the thing food dreams are made of. Now unlikely as this sounds, Mrs. T became enamored with a derivation of this southern treat, the boudin ball. That is when the filling is not put into a hog casing like a respectable sausage but rather shaped into a ball, rolled in cornmeal and... you guessed it, fried to crispy perfection. We purchased a couple of packages of the sausage and four fist sized boudin balls. The fellow who helped us was visibly shocked when we told him we wanted only four balls, like this was the smallest order he had ever processed. By the way, there was a block long line of cars at the drive up window of Billy's.



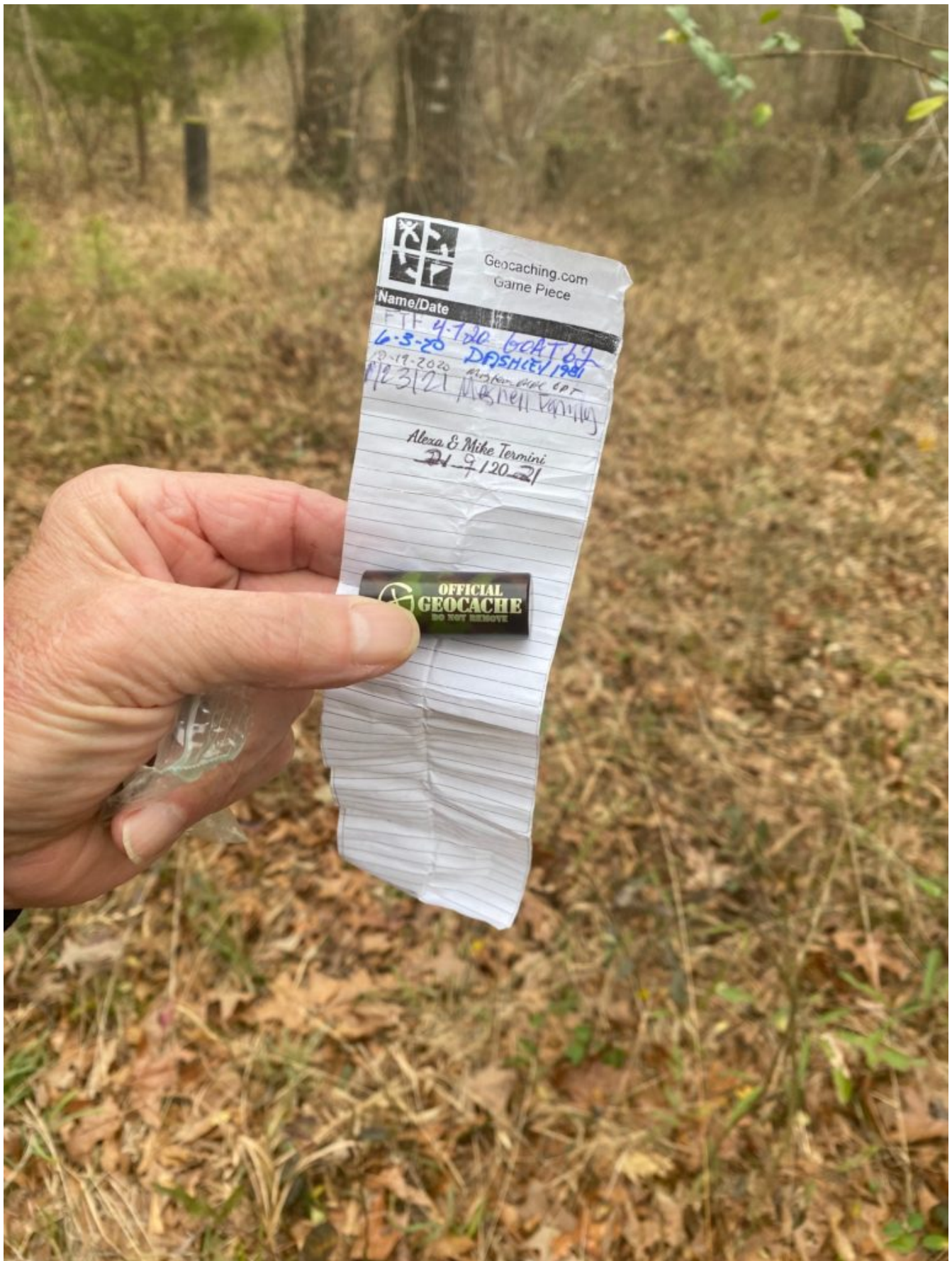
quite the edifice hey?

Serving suggestion? Well, nestled in a fluffy bed of grits with smoked tomato sauce, naturally with plenty of Crystal hot sauce. By the way, get used to this stuff. Say what you will about Tapatio and Tabasco, Crystal is the number one choice in all of Louisiana. Any restaurant without this on the table is not worth going into.

We did spend some time walking around the island where our AirBnb was located. Naturally, the Termini's left their mark on several geocache records.



we left a joker card with a message to the person who placed this particular cache



Now we should talk about the cottage. We were charmed by the pictures in the AirBnb ad. Looked lovely and comfortable, and in many ways it was. The waterfront cottage seemed

like such a nice spot that after booking a week we immediately went back and made it two. Mistake. It turned out to be about 400 square feet. Think of an airstream with a screened porch! The lesson? Just like realtors using the word "fixer upper," watch out for the dreaded "cozy" in any short term rental description! As soon as we arrived we determined that perhaps ten days would be plenty here and, in our minds made plans to leave a few days early. Oh boy, were we wrong. At seven days we began to hear reports of snow which, as you might imagine, is rare in this part of the country. I thought, well how bad can it be? How much snow can they possibly have? I think Ted Cruz in Texas had the exact same thought at the time and wasn't I proud to be channeling that fine public servant. So here we were on the Saturday before we were ready to leave having the exact same thought: Perhaps NOW is the time to take off, well before any prediction of snow should come true. Mrs. T and I later confessed to each other we both had the same thought at the same time but did not want to sound squeamish to our respective beloved.... The following was the sight from our cabin on that Sunday morning...



a mere 6 inches, how long could it last...



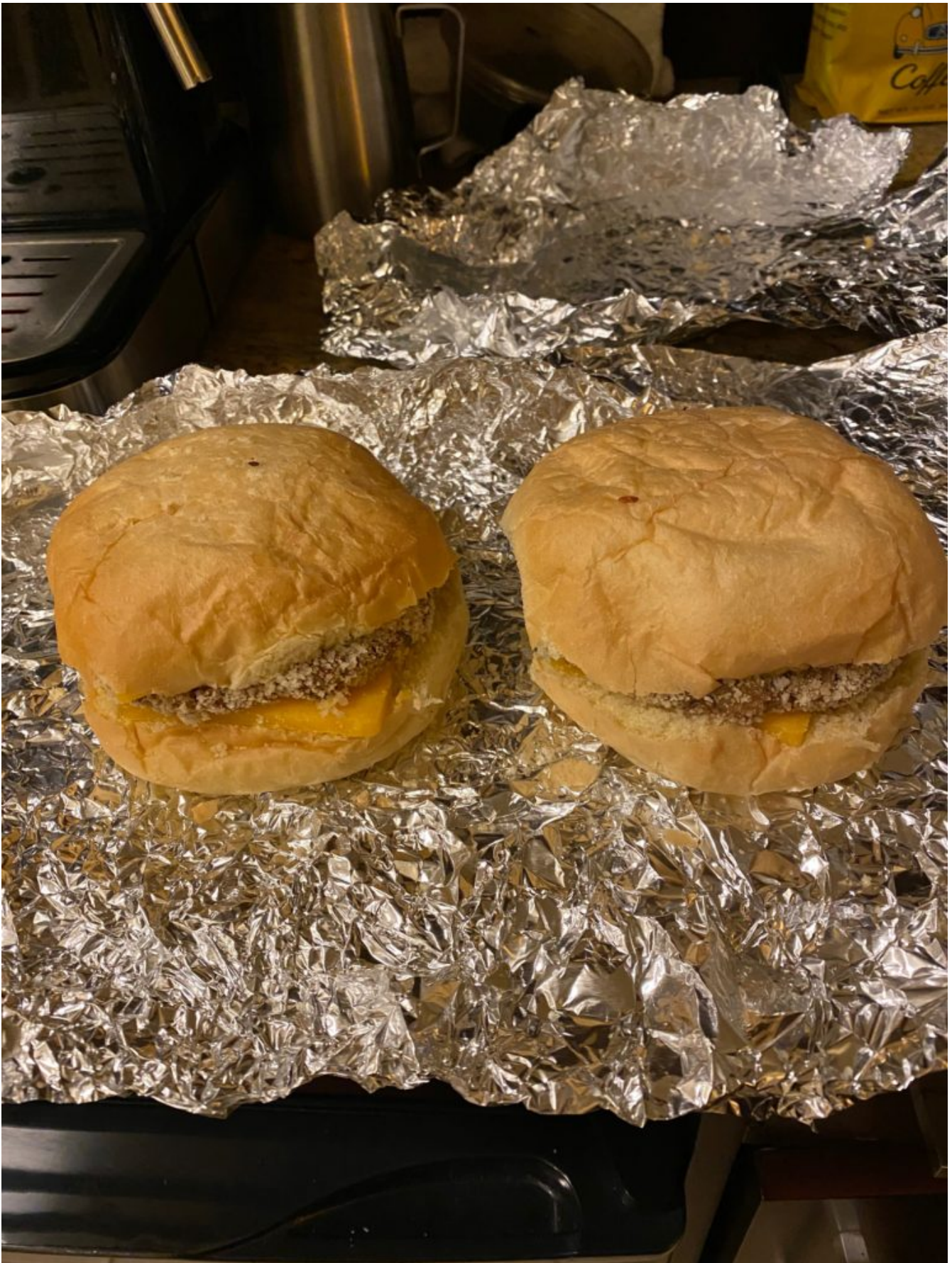
a long time, that's how long

I had a plan... since the next snowfall, yet another 6 inches, was not due till Tuesday, we wait until Monday, a full day of roads being cleared and snow melting for us to make our escape to Hot Springs Arkansas. We loaded up the car and headed out on the little country road off the island absolutely certain that although no plows or salt trucks had made an appearance, surely the highway would be clear. I could, with my sturdy four wheel drive make my way to the highway only 4 miles away...did I mention the other 6 inches came early?



and this my friends is what a state highway looks like in Louisiana after a 100 year snowfall...

Low and behold, no one owns a plow or salt truck in LA. Who knew? Get to the interstate Mike, surely that will get you north to Arkansas safely... oh no, not here. They closed all the interstates. Did you hear what I said? They CLOSE the interstate system in the entire state. Ok, four miles to the state highway, which was all but impassable. I came upon some poor Texan trying to get home in a trans am. he could not move! I recommended turning back but he seemed to be dead set on making his way up a 5% grade and making no progress whatsoever. We chose to turn south on the state highway and head back into the town of Shreveport. Well, Bossier City which is just on the other side of the river. Our total distance traveled? Eight miles. Our time to make this treacherous journey? Two hours. Yes, you read correctly, four miles per hour and it was still a white knuckle trip. We were fortunate enough to find a hotel room and even more fortunate to find that all of Shreveport was without water! Seems the main line froze. Did I also mention that when we left our cozy cottage the pipes had frozen and the power was out? Oh joy, but here we were. A safe haven with all the other refugees, mostly from Texas, which had also been entirely crippled by the storm. The hotel had somewhat of a restaurant on the premises, but no employees could make it to work so the lowest level cook took charge and thankfully was cobbling together food to take out. This situation did not seem to bother the Texans since most were drinking their dinner at the hotel bar. Also, no maid service. Oh the humanity. But seriously, it was fine. We had one takeout meal and decided to dig into our food stash we kept during our travels. No microwave in the room but they were foolish enough to leave me with an iron. Twenty minutes later it was boudin sausage and cheese paninis!







Ahh... I can see my Michelin star on the way!

Well, five days captive in beautiful northern Louisiana and we decided to make a break for it. It was 29 miles to the border of Arkansas, how long could it take? Days of sun and temps barely above freezing left the roads partially slush and partially covered in a glacier of packed snow and ice. Slow going but we made it in only three hours, wow, we're now up to ten miles per hour average speed, quite the improvement. Strange as it may sound, at the border the roads were actually plowed and the interstate, which we had been paralleling, was open and clear of snow. Who would have imagined that the much maligned state of Arkansas would be the technological leader of the south in disaster response! The bar was low....

My thoughts during this time in captivity?

AirBnb's are the ultimate exercise in going through a stranger's medicine cabinet

We are only one sniffle away from imagined quarantine disaster

I leave a roll of toilet paper at each of our AirBnbs as an offering to the gods of pandemics

When will my cribbage skills ever improve, or will Mrs. T's just keep getting better?

If we are forced to settle in northern Louisiana will I have to buy a confederate flag just to stay out of trouble?

Did I ever in my life imagine that being in Bossier City would be a lucky break?

Next stop Hot Springs, Arkansas... spoiler alert... it was nowhere near hot but there were springs!

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