

# STEPPING OFF THE EDGE

travels of a reluctant retiree

**MARCH 10, 2020 BY MIKE T**

## A harrowing drive, luggage Jenga, and non stop parades.

Well, took off from Galveston on a rainy morning but nothing your intrepid driver could not handle. Grew up driving in Jersey thunderstorms, so forgettaboutit.

Not this storm my friends, it has the stalwart Mrs. T on the edge of her seat.

Mrs. T; “can you see”

Me: “no”

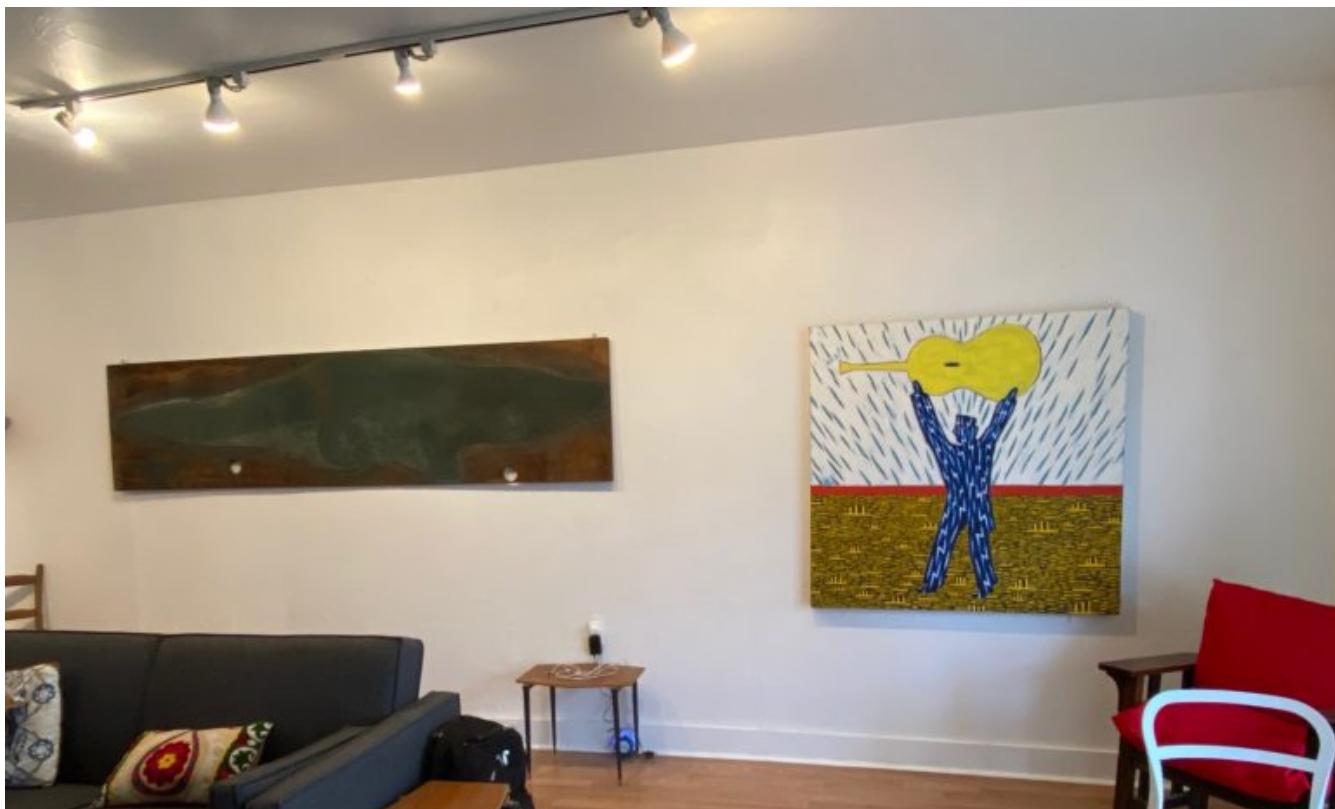
Mrs. T: well that’s not good”

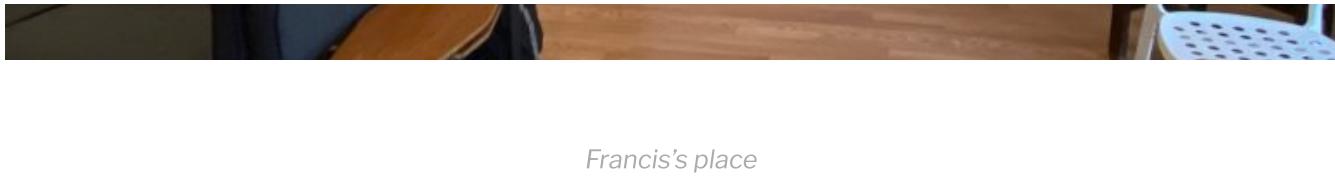
Me: “no”

We found ourselves on the illustrious Sam Houston Tollway. Now far be it from me to disparage one of the late great heroes of Texas but please, two \$1.75 tolls to have the pleasure of driving for 60 miles between K-rails (those terrible concrete things they line up on construction areas of freeways), since it would seem the entire Sam Houston Tollway was currently being re-constructed. Well, at least there was zero visibility.

We escaped this fine road at 11 to eat at one of the infamous Black Bear Diners. I mention this not because the food was particularly noteworthy, but rather to ask the question: Why did I have to drive 3000 miles to finally have the pleasure of being called darlin’ and love by every waitperson we encountered? And, why don’t we start a movement to do that everywhere? Ok, ok , just hold off before I get a barrage of comments about being gender neutral, mindfull, PC, etc etc. It’s nice, admit it.

Upon arriving at our home for the next three days on what turned out to be Lundi Gras or Fat Monday, which I did not know was a thing, but it is. Yes, our home, owned by an artist who has a studio attached and met us at the door, this place was, well, wait, let me think... like the apartment of either your grannie or that cool uncle, not to be confused with the creepy uncle, which we all had, do not lie. You know the guy, the one we would get to visit for the weekend who lived in a far cooler part of town than our parents, who let us have the occasional alcoholic beverage, and had all sorts of cool stuff laying around. Yes, mine had a copious selection of porn, but that was just the cherry on the Sunday for me.





Francis's place

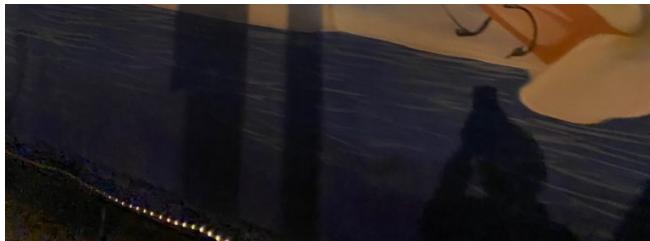
Yes, plenty of good old Francis's art hanging around in addition to, not pictured, some bizarre sculptures in the enclosed entry into our apartment.

Venturing out that evening we were greeting with our first taste of festival parades and Louisiana charm. Side note here: This state, despite the stereotypes, is warm, friendly and comforting in all ways.

Below, the Lundi Gras evening celebration.









This particular parade was named the Queen Evangeline parade. This stuff is truly organized madness. You have to be on your game to deftly catch the float throws (all sorts of stuff thrown to the crowd from the floats) which are not merely the eponymous bead strings you always see. From stuffed animals to mini footballs, beer cups with “reelect judge Judy Brown” imprinted on them, and large concussion producing strings of megga beads... more about the concussions when we arrive in New Orleans. The marching bands were filled with talent and sass. The people all smiling and wishing us happy Mardi Gras. Grabbing a few boudin sausages at a local market I treated Mrs. T to my favorite thing, boudin on a bun with fried onions and Crystal hot sauce. Heaven.

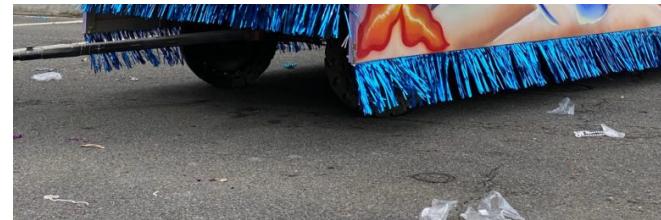
Next day, bright and early, we are on foot, big surprise, to ferret out a market and get some breakfast, which due to our propensity for lounging in bed till 11 has turned into lunch for breakfast. Not, mind you, brunch with its eggs benedict or fancy scrambles but rather, not unlike San Antonio, Mexican food and sometimes with luck in Louisiana, a nice Po Boy. After our traditional wandering, here we were on Mardi Gras day finding out in Lafayette everything is closed! No local food except from food trucks on the main parade route. So we found a diner, Greek of course, and settled into (NOT) cajun shawarmas. On the way home, the daytime rendition of Mardi Gras! Even greater controlled madness.









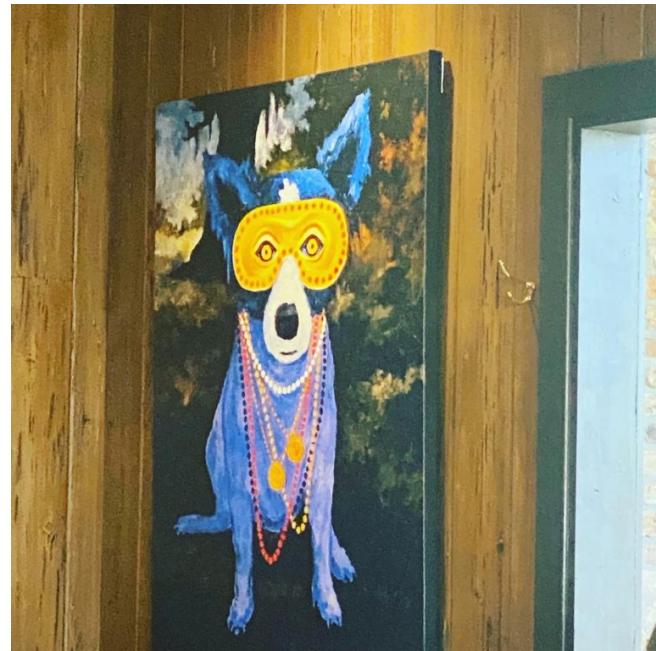


What you see here is actually three parades back to back. Truly an amazing day. This, we found out, was a hometown Mardi Gras as opposed to the lavish and insane New Orleans Krewe driven parades.

That night I received a surprising request for another night of Boudin. Should I tell her it has chicken liver in it? Nah.

Ash Wednesday, you know that day, the excuse for Mardi Gras... we were able to find a much sought after spot The Blue Dog Cafe, started by George Rodrigue, the artist famous for the blue dog paintings shown below. This was no Greek diner! Me, shrimp po boy and Mrs T showing her new found love had boudin balls. This place lives up to its reputation.





Last dinner in Lafayette called for a visit to a local favorite, Kirk's You Needa Butcher, where you will be greeted by Blake, the current owner who was formerly a sheriff for 20+ years and a close friend to Kirk himself. When Kirk died suddenly (diet related perhaps, I don't know, cracklin overdose?) he quit law enforcement and took over the shop. Now you might think this as a mismatch of professions, but believe me Blake was born to this business. He descends upon you when you enter with all sorts of samples, for which he is deservedly proud. I started with the traditional paper tray filled with cajun chicken cracklings... oh my. When Mrs T was offered this treat she shied away till he told her, "Don't worry, darlin', there's some chicken meat on them." The lady behind the counter with the ubiquitous ash cross on her forehead, remember, this is Ash Wednesday, said, "You must not be catholic," she answered "No, but my husband is" as they both look to the back of the shop where Blake and I were currently forming a bond over a mini andouille chilli dog.

Mrs. T added, “Well, he is what you would call a lapsed catholic.”

After loading up on sausage for some concoction I was destined to create and a frozen bag of Blake’s own recipe of sausage and chicken gumbo, we made it to the car without any more samples... well, not quite, Blake noticed our license plate and chased us down to the car to bestow upon me his own cajun spice mix.



As soon as we have a prolonged conversation with Francis, our host, about the authenticity of the deep country Mardi Gras Indians parade he attended on Tuesday, we

were off to Baton Rouge. First, a quick appointment for the intrepid Telluride to have its 7500 mile service. While there a woman in the waiting area and hearing we were looking for a good place to eat, with the southern hospitality that is the pride of Louisiana it seems, turned us on to Dwight's just a block away. No pictures but oh my... I ordered the fried fish, and let me tell you I watched this lady PILE ON the fried fish. Well, eight pieces and two sides later I rolled myself out to the car to head for Baton Rouge, last stop before we land in New Orleans for a month.

 **UNCATEGORIZED**

2 Replies to “A harrowing drive, luggage Jenga, and non stop parades.”



**Tess**

**MARCH 14, 2020 AT 10:44 PM**

Wow! Talk about yer floats! Great pictures. Also, do they let the boudins go after they ‘take’ their balls?



**Mike T**

**MARCH 15, 2020 AT 10:07 PM**

yes, there are roving bands of boudin castrati roaming the streets. harmless but understandably angry

*Comments are closed.*