

bookreview

By Paul Duncan, MD
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When Tim Moore, a middle-aged British travel writer with virtually zero Model T driving experience, sets his mind to drive a 1924 Model T Touring car from the east coast to the west coast, you know things are going to get interesting.

Moore is a participatory journalist known for scoffing at common sense and leaping into the deep end of whatever catches his interest. He takes his readers along for the ride and mostly finishes what he starts, including previously hopping on a bike to pedal the 2,256 mile Tour de France route.

Tim did seek help for his future T-trek from fellow countryman and MTFCA member, Ross Lilleker, who owns Lilleker Antique Auto Restorations with his wife Jennifer. They live in College Station, Texas. Ross, a British native, arranged for Tim to purchase a 1924 Model T Touring from a 93-year-old Houstonite who had owned it for 51 years.

Ross transported the T, which Tim promptly named “Mike,” from Texas to Virginia where Moore’s trip begins. Ross’ sage advice and car selection favored a successful outcome for Tim’s marathon road trip during the summer of 2017. Moore drove 6,102 miles over 81 days and visited 22 states.

Tim immediately got into trouble with the first ten miles of his trip. He panicked when he inadvertently turned onto a major Virginia highway and promptly stalled the engine on the median. He was nearly run over by a semi truck. In addition, the car wouldn’t restart. He gets help by phone from Ross.

The first three days through Virginia, West Virginia, and into Ohio are difficult. He loses his brakes on a steep Appalachian mountain

road and is stopped by police for driving too slow in a blinding rainstorm.

Moore’s dialogue is always entertaining and informative. He extemporaneously relates the history of the areas he travels through. But the real heroes in this book are the special MTFCA members who rescue and help Tim along the way.

The reader meets Paul Griesse from Granville, Ohio who is a Model T owner, MTFCA member, master T mechanic, and entrepreneur. Paul installs a new starter and makes needed adjustments to get “Mike” back in shape. The author states “Paul and his wife dispensed hospitality with relaxed conviviality putting me so literally at home-what very excellent people.”

One major goal of Moore’s journey was to get to know individual Americans and to understand their attitudes about a number of issues of interest to him. Time and time again, as he travels across the country, Tim experiences extended and often unexpected hospitality and assistance as he meets the locals.

The author relates Model T and Henry Ford history along the way and especially in Detroit. Moore drove through Alabama, Mississippi and into Texas so Ross could check “Mike” out before Tim continued northwest.

Never known for taking the easy path, Tim’s route diagonally crossed Texas to the Panhandle, north to Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, with a repair break in Colorado and on to Mt. Rushmore where he noted, “I think you may have to be American to fully appreciate Rushmore.”

In Montana, Scott and Althea Confer come to Tim’s rescue. Scott replaces a connecting rod so Tim can continue over the Continental Divide at Sylvan Pass (8,524 ft.) into Yellowstone.

As he approached Bend, Oregon, Tim heard "...a heavy metal explosion that shook 'Mikes' front end." The car suddenly stopped! Tim had been warned that a broken crankshaft could end his trip. A passerby, Don Pennington (a local Model A club member) offers to hook Tim up with his mechanic, who he was 'pretty sure' knew his way around a Model T.

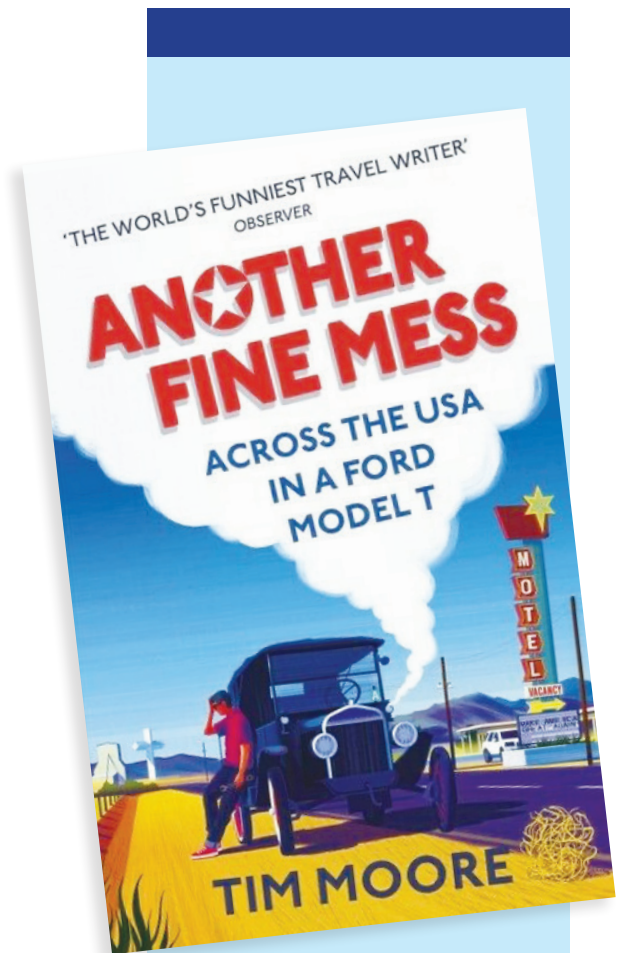
Mike Stenkamp (the Model A mechanic) arrived with a lunch his wife had prepared for Tim. He wasn't sure of the exact problem, but knew they needed to get "Car-Mike" to his shop. In short order, a damaged timing gear and a broken crankshaft were identified.

"Car-Mike" needed a 10/10 undersized crankshaft. Tim's recount of the hunt for a perfect crankshaft through remote high desert barns and outbuildings, armed only with a micrometer is realistic and delightful.

They finally locate their prize in the workshop of a guy who keeps 11 Model Ts running. Mike projects it will take a week to do the repair, so Tim decides to do some sightseeing around Bend. He writes, "Bend has breathtaking scenes of grandeur that would be national attractions in any other country. *Spoiler Alert:* "Car-Mike" is restored to life and Tim ultimately reaches Seattle. Anyone who drives and repairs Model Ts will appreciate what Tim put his Model T through in this 6,000 mile journey.

I heartily recommend riding along with "Mike" and Tim in this travel adventure book. The real enjoyment for me was in the history of places revealed in the author's words and through his eyes. He was appreciative of the historical and social complexity of the country and the vastness it encompasses. I suggest you keep a road atlas handy as you read the book.

The stories told to Tim, and the attitudes expressed by the folks he met along the way, give this story authenticity. In the end, Tim decides to take old "Mike" across the pond to England. And, once again, an MTFCA member, Freighter Jim, helps transport "Mike" to Long Beach, California for shipment. □



Another Fine Mess
Across the USA in a Ford Model T

by Tim Moore

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