



BACK ROADS AND BARBECUE

Hankering for a Porsche road trip, **JEAN JENNINGS** and favorite traveling companion Hurley Haywood make a dash from Detroit to Atlanta in a **911 TURBO**, via the best back roads in Tennessee.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARTYN GODDARD

HURLEY HAYWOOD DOESN'T GET OUT MUCH, REALLY. I mean, he gets *around*. He gets around a lot. For instance, in just the three twenty-four-hour races he won at Le Mans, he and his two teammates racked up 8951 miles, an average of 2984 miles each. In his two twelve-hour Sebring wins, he completed 2449 miles with two teammates, each driver averaging 816 miles. His record five firsts at the 24 Hours of Daytona accumulated 12,960 total miles for him and his teammates, for another zillion blisteringly fast miles each. Now add thirty-three additional Daytonas, twenty-six more Sebrings, nine other Le Mans endurance races, and all the rest of the races in his storied forty-year career, and our friend has been around and around and around some more.

But he hasn't been out on the open road since he and I did the 1994 One Lap of America in a Porsche 911 and bonded forever. That was Hurley's first-ever cross-country road trip. It was also his last, and we still talk about it seventeen years later. So he was really overdue for a second roadgoing adventure, one that went somewhere other than into the pits for refueling and service.

Enter deputy editor Joe DeMatio with the cockamamie idea that I should repeat my very first AUTOMOBILE MAGAZINE road trip, a celebration of the Porsche 911 Turbo's return to America in

1986 after a six-year absence. I drove it from Detroit to Porsche headquarters in Reno, Nevada. The trip with Brit photographer Dougie Firth took five days, mostly due to horrendous weather that sent us to fourteen-below-zero Amarillo, Texas—as far south as we could go and still reach Nevada. It was so cold that I pulled my nightgown from the suitcase and it was frozen stiff. One morning in Springfield, Missouri, we found the car encased in ice and needed buckets of hot water to get through to the door locks. The other standout memories of that adventure include visiting a cat-house in Nevada and a constant flirtation with driving on fumes.

I immediately thought of my favorite long-distance driver/traveling companion. Hurley was so game that he left his Deep South home for frigid Detroit. This was a week before his emergence from a one-year retirement to race in his thirty-eighth Rolex 24 Hours of Daytona for Brumos Porsche (with whom he won his first two Daytonas and where he's vice president).

In the intervening years, Porsche had uprooted and resettled in Atlanta, Georgia, so that worked in favor of our busy calendars. But it begged the question, what possible chance of adventure could we have driving from Detroit to Atlanta, a straight 722-mile shot down I-75?

First, we needed a 911 Turbo to recreate the magic of twenty-five



Detroit, Michigan » The first (and only predawn) fill-up of our 1209-mile trip to Porsche headquarters in Atlanta. It could only get warmer.

years ago. I wasn't worried about the nonstop crappy weather across the South; the magic would be in watching the world's greatest endurance racer manage any dicey winter driving this time, instead of me.

The adventure, obviously, would be found in the detours. Out came the maps and the travel guides, and we zeroed in on Tennessee—home of Nashville nightlife and the 318 hairpin turns of the Tail of the Dragon, about 200 miles east—as our perfect land of opportunity.

When asked how he felt about barbecue, Hurley said, "I wouldn't mind if we ate barbecue for every meal." And that pretty much concluded our planning.

MONDAY: CAN THERE BE TOO MUCH BARBECUE?

IT IS BRUTALLY COLD AT 5 A.M., the hour of my departure—ten degrees and snowing lightly. The Turbo arrived Friday morning, and road test coordinator Mike Ofara, God bless him, noticed that it wasn't on winter tires, so he immediately had a set installed. The Turbo was a convertible, and its front trunk was pretty much full of the bulky wind blocker in its zippered case. Luckily, we are being shadowed by our camera crew—videographer Paul Long and my favorite travel photographer, twenty-five-year AUTOMOBILE MAGAZINE veteran Martyn Goddard—in a Porsche Cayenne, which now holds their bags, my bags, their camera gear, and the wind blocker. We sweep up a whimpering Haywood from his airport hotel at 7 a.m. in the frigid dark, toss his small duffel and briefcase into the Turbo's empty front trunk, and head south with me at the wheel.

"Oh, good. PDK," he says, looking at the lever for the supertrick dual-clutch automatic transmission that shifts the Turbo's gears faster and smoother than you can do it yourself—Porsche puts the Turbo cabriolet's 0-to-60-mph time at a blistering 3.3 seconds with the PDK versus 3.5 seconds with the manual. "You can drive." We look at each other and he begins to snort.

"Don't you start with me, buster," I mutter.

With Hurley beside me and the toll basket looming, I rolled past, threw the money in, and accelerated. But the bar across the road didn't go up, and I braked. The bar rose, and I lurched forward. Hurley said nothing. Good. He was supposed to be sleeping so he would be fresh for the first race at 8:30 a.m. With relief, I got back up to speed and cruised into the night.

What was that choking sound? I looked at Hurley. His hand was clamped over his mouth. His chest was heaving; tears were rolling down his cheek.

"What?" I demanded.

"Buh-HA-HA-HA!" was his reply.



Somewhere on I-75, Ohio » With the trip just underway, breakfast takes precedence over the tight schedule. The "reality show" takes over a corner of a Bob Evans, while Hurley plans barbecue delights down the road.

"You didn't like my clutch foot?" I said through clenched teeth.

"More like club foot!" He couldn't stop. He howled with laughter, wiping his eyes, controlling himself for a moment, then losing it again.

"Get a grip," I muttered. "You haven't laughed this hard at any of my jokes."

"Who would have thought you couldn't drive?!"

(One Lap For Practice, December 1994)

"Who would have thought you couldn't drive?" he quotes himself from the passenger seat, seventeen years later.

"You are so slaying me now," I snarl, and nail the gas. Thank God this car has PDK, I think.

Hurley loves the Turbo: "This is absolutely my most favorite of the 911s. It has power, comfort, looks. It's so good that it makes even a bad driver look good." (I give him the stink eye.) "I am just making a statement, not pointing fingers."

Getting through the cold, gray wasteland that is Ohio is our only chore. "Where are we?" asks Hurley, as we approach industrial Dayton on the Great Miami River. "It's depressing."

"No, it's not. This is the home of the Engineers Club of Dayton, started in 1914 by Charles Kettering. It celebrates great Dayton inventors, like the Wright Brothers and the guy who invented the pop-top can." I believe I hear a snort.

"Is this Cincinnati?" he asks fifty miles later. "Depressing. If I lived where it snowed, I would want it to snow a lot. Not this gray, depressed..."

Jean: "Buffalo!"

Hurley: "Not what I had in mind."

"Aspen," we say in unison. I'm on to him.

As I drive, Hurley cheerfully immerses himself in a special BBQ issue of *Popular Plates* magazine featuring Roadfood's Jane and Michael Stern. Hurley is a fabulous cook and is carefully reading each of the ninety-some recipes within its pages. "Lemon icebox pie!" he exclaims. "That's my favorite! I make this. Wait. Egg whites? It says here, 'Whip egg whites until frothy.' Egg whites! This is a damn secret revealed!" he chortles.



La Grange, Kentucky » We have yet to discover that Big R's Bar-B-Q is closed and that Hurley needs glasses.

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Outside Nashville, Tennessee » This is more like it: Big barbecue taste (on corn bread pancakes) from a one-story hole-in-the wall on Clarksville Pike. Smokin' Joe meets us at his joint, bringing out a red boxing glove and a couple bags of fish breading to mug for the cameras.





Honky Tonk Row, Nashville » Jack's Bar-B-Que—in the middle of the 400 block of Broadway—offers meat and sides cafeteria-style. It closes early, but there's plenty of entertainment on this block, which throws off enough neon to rival the Vegas Strip.



Hurley couldn't figure out the route book while I drove across Wisconsin. "This isn't my job," he whined as I grabbed the book from him and tried to sort us out. I pulled over when we hit a big, fat Road Closed sign.

(One Lap for Practice, December 1994)

Suddenly, the La Grange exit looms out of the rain. We find a very vibrant, historic downtown, blocks away from our destination. Which is closed.

"Look down the block—the Grits Café!" he says. "We're eating there." We have not dressed to blend. We are: a dashing, blond racing driver from Florida; a giant girl who bosses everyone around and pays the bills; a fuzzy-bearded Brit with an impenetrable accent; and a Hollywood-looking guy behind a rather large, rolling video camera. "It's just a reality show, don't mind us," I say.

Maybe we do blend. This is a very cutesy café and tchotchke shop jammed with candles and fairy statues in every corner, in-



cluding the bathroom. A guy who looks like a lawyer is eating soup at one of the little metal café tables. A nicely dressed family is enjoying lunch and delicate porcelain cups of tea at another. There are no grits on the menu. The food is homemade, as are the pies, says the waitress, who actually makes the pies. Hurley bonds with her when he reveals the secret ingredient for lemon icebox pie. "Egg whites!?" she exclaims. "Egg whites!" he confirms.

"Why do you call this place the Grits Café?" I ask.

"The Grits Café? Where did you see that?" she asks.

"On the awning outside."

We go out and look at the white words on the black awning: SERENDIPITY is on the front. GIFTS CAFÉ is on the side. I look at Hurley. We go back inside. This cracks up the whole place.

"I would have liked a nice bowl of grits," says the lawyer.

Crossing unexpectedly into the Central Time Zone plays into our plan for multiple meals. So by 4 p.m. (which is now 3 p.m.), we hit Joe's BBQ & Fish just outside of Nashville, looking for catfish "crispy from the fryer" and "corn bread sandwiching pulled pork, too hot to handle." There is no missing the one-story pale yellow building and its red signage, with a big smoker parked right out front. Yes! The Open sign is lit. Our reality show overwhelms the lone woman at the drive-through window, who takes one look at the rolling video camera, covers her face, and calls the boss—her uncle, Smokin' Joe. "They need you down here, Mr. Joe," she says. Then she delivers heavenly pulled pork cradled by golden corn bread—cooked like pancakes here. The fish is as crispy and hot as promised and hangs out of the bun by two inches on each side. Smokin' Joe has arrived and dons a red boxing glove he uses for promotional purposes. He clucks over us, smiling broadly as I dig into the corn-pancake-cuddled pork. With my hands. The sandwich is as big as my head. Many photos later, armed with Smokin' Joe's Gourmet Cajun Tartar Sauce, we head for the lights of the big city a few miles away.

Nashville's neon-lit Honky Tonk Row—in essence, the 400 block of Broadway—is one block from our hotel, and we postpone checking in because the three flying neon pigs on the Jack's Bar-B-Que marquee are about to go dark. Jack's closes at 8 p.m. on Monday. Both sides of the block are wall-to-wall honky-tonks, packed with patrons enjoying live bands. Who will feed *them*? We park in front with the top down and run inside, just in time to line up cafeteria-style and order. We shovel it in, shoulder to shoulder at wooden picnic tables while admiring walls covered with celebrities, taxidermy, Civil War artifacts of the Confederate kind, copper boilers, and a pair or two of longhorns.

Fortified, we tuck the Turbo in for the night, then stroll slowly down Broadway past bar after bar, country-western and southern rock blaring out open doors. Robert's Western World, Legends Corner, Tootsie's Orchid Lounge—Hurley wants nothing to do with any of them. He turns down twelve jumping joints, one after another. Where does the fastidious Haywood finally deign to visit?

"Margaritaville?!" I howl in protest. "It's a chain! Jimmy Buffett is not in there! We're in Nashville!"



Leiper's Fork, Tennessee »

Cheyenne Gaffalione and owner Rob Robinson man the kitchen at Puckett's Grocery, the social hub of Leiper's Fork. A pile of wood sits ready for the smoker.



"At least it's clean. And everyone in those other places looked suzzzy," he says.

"Nobody had better find out about this," I mutter into my very delicious double Patrón and OJ with fresh lime. And another shot on the side.

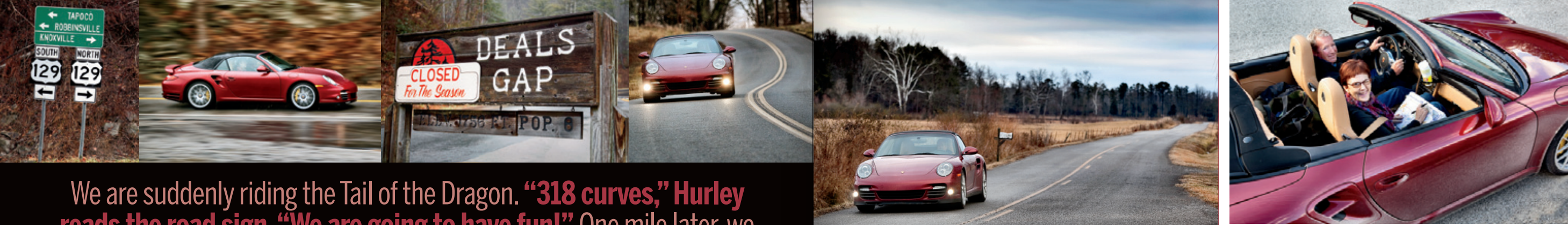
TUESDAY: WILL THE TAIL BITE US?

IT'S RAINING LIKE IT WILL NEVER STOP when we leave Nashville. That doesn't faze Goddard, who has packed full rain gear. It also doesn't faze former weatherman Long, who's packed *extra* rain gear just in case. Yet he frets over his video camera. God knows how he will get a minute of footage in the deluge. The endurance racer doesn't give the rain a second thought. The Turbo not only has winter tires, it's got all-wheel drive.

I don't want anyone to know that breakfast is twenty miles away—in the wrong direction. After the Margaritaville mutiny, I am back at the helm, and it will be a forced march to an authentic experience. Barbecue is unlikely this early, but Puckett's Grocery is highly regarded by *BBQ*, so we will eat what they have. We are finally off the interstate and out in the Tennessee countryside. In fact, the road to Leiper's Fork, where we will find Puckett's, is part of the lovely Natchez Trace. It's hard to find a bad road down here, and with the rain now stopping and the mist lifting, we have all come alive.

Puckett's—established in 1956—looks like it's the center of the universe around here. Old chairs are gathered up in a conversational circle out front in the rain, right next to the big smoker. Inside, old kitchen tables—some wooden, some '50s-vintage of white enamel—fill the big space between the food counter, a few short aisles of groceries, and a wooden stage in front of the picture window. Owner Rob Robinson is supervising the morning deliveries, and Cheyenne Gaffalione serves us perfect eggs, impossibly tall biscuits, and the best bacon I have ever eaten.

We park in front with the top down and run inside,
just in time to line up cafeteria-style and order.
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We are suddenly riding the Tail of the Dragon. “318 curves,” Hurley reads the road sign. “We are going to have fun!” One mile later, we are riding the Tail behind a school bus. Which is behind a pickup truck.



Enter the Dragon » Perhaps we should have worried that businesses along the serpentine Tail of the Dragon—Route 129—were closed for the season. But rain and heavy mists shrouding the Great Smokies didn’t bother us, and Porsche racing driver Hurley Haywood was at the wheel. Stupid us.

Having happily finished a superb rendition of his favorite meal of the day—breakfast—Hurley has a sudden interest in driving. We promptly get lost looking for an interstate entrance that turns out to be not quite built yet. There isn’t a straight road in this county, and being lost is no bad thing.

An hour later, we pass Puckett’s from the other direction and finally unscrew ourselves from the mountains. But not before I recognize one gorgeous, snaking two-lane we’re enjoying as a leg of one of our favorite All-Star test routes. By noon, we are finally on a direct course for the Tail of the Dragon.

At 3 p.m. we exit at Lenoir City, crossing a soaring bridge over the Tellico Dam. We are now on US-129 for the main event of our little sojourn. Ice and snow from an older storm melts in the fields.

We are suddenly riding the Tail of the Dragon. “318 curves,” Hurley reads the road sign. “We are going to have fun!” One mile later, we are riding the Tail behind a school bus. Which is behind a pickup truck. The next sign we pass says, “Switchback curves ahead for 9 miles. Consider alternate route.” We assume that neither the pickup nor the school bus will heed this advice. Our race-track is their local route home.

Five miles later, the bus stops at Harley-Davidson Dragon, and kids pile out. Before we can feel sorry for ourselves, the pickup turns off and the bus starts hauling comparative ass. Hurley is doing 60 mph through the curves behind it, and that’s only for a few miles before the bus leaves us. The road is ours. Pouring rain has given way to heavy mist, which Hurley refers to as “barbecue

smoke.” He’s right about the smoke in a sense, since we *are* riding along the Great Smoky Mountains, looking down at a stunning view of Chilhowee Lake to our right. Hurley’s ridden the Tail before, years ago, but in good weather when the tourist traffic was thick. He can’t help but compare the old Turbo to the one he is masterfully putting through its paces.

“In the old days, you had to be working all the time. The old car was such a buckboard, a real handful. This car is flat, composed, stable, comfy. It has amazing damping in comparison.

“My first Turbo was black on black and was a gift from Porsche for winning my first Le Mans in 1977. It was maybe one of the first Turbos to come to the States. It was quite the sensation. I think it was 3.0 liters, maybe 250 hp.”

For the next hour, we fly this way and that—turn after hundreds of turns—for fun and photos and videos. We pass Deal’s Gap—the state line—and the road settles down and continues prettily into North Carolina over the Cheoah Dam and along a rocky section of the Cheoah River. It’s colder down here in the Nantahala National Forest, with a lot more snow piled up along the shoulder. Hurley is very chipper as we reenter civilization. “Why doesn’t Porsche have driving events on roads like these?” he wonders.

The road back across the mountain promises to be just as fun. We are, naturally, on fumes when we find the Cherohala Skyway, immediately past a sign that says, “Road ahead closed.” But when we arrive, a piece of cardboard is covering the Road Closed sign. These are the ancient lands of the Cherokee Nation, and spying a



The Specs: Then and Now		
	1986 Porsche 911 Turbo	2010 Porsche 911 Turbo cabriolet
BASE PRICE	\$49,078	\$144,750
Powertrain		
ENGINE	12-valve turbo flat-6	24-valve twin-turbo flat-6
DISPLACEMENT	3.3 liters (201 cu in)	3.8 liters (232 cu in)
HORSEPOWER	282 hp @ 5500 rpm	500 hp @ 6000 rpm
TORQUE	287 lb-ft @ 4000 rpm	516 lb-ft @ 1950 rpm
TRANSMISSION	4-speed manual	7-speed dual-clutch automatic
DRIVE	Rear-wheel	4-wheel
Chassis		
STEERING	Unassisted	Hydraulically assisted
SUSPENSION, FRONT	Strut-type, torsion bars	Strut-type, coil springs
SUSPENSION, REAR	Semitrailing, torsion bars	Multilink, coil springs
BRAKES	Vented discs	Vented carbon-ceramic discs, ABS
TIRES	Dunlop SP Sport D40	Nokian WR
TIRE SIZE F, R	205/55VR-16, 245/45VR-16	235/35VR-19, 295/30VR-19
Measurements		
L x W x H	168.9 x 69.9 x 51.6 in	176.3 x 72.9 x 51.2 in
WHEELBASE	89.4 in	92.5 in
WEIGHT	2943 lb	3682 lb
EPA MILEAGE	15/20 mpg	16/24 mpg
0–60 MPH	5.5 sec	3.3 sec
TOP SPEED	157 mph	193 mph

reservation-police pickup at the side of the road, we stop and ask the officer if there’s gas along the Skyway. He sounds exactly like Junior Johnson, which startles the hell out of me. “Gas is just a mahl away in town,” he drawls, and off we go to Robbinsville. Everything feels better on a full tank, but our sense of security is misplaced. After checking the map and arguing between the long way around or up and over, we choose up and over. How bad can it be?

You can guess the answer.

Fog is moving in as we climb into the mountains. Because we never read the brochure, we do not know that we’re about to begin a very long, steep, fifteen-mile climb to more than a mile-high elevation, followed by another twenty-one miles down into Tennessee on a road that is breathtaking in its many turns and long vistas. We never read that “it can be desolate at night and extremely dangerous in winter months” or that there are no facilities the entire length and little evidence of civilization “from views that rival or surpass any from the Blue Ridge Parkway.” Not that we could see a thing. This will be a race against time and weather. It’s 37 degrees, with light rain falling and twilight settling. “I can’t see anything,” Hurley says to himself. I can’t see exactly the same thing.

The road is very shiny. Is it glare ice? I am silently squirming. It is also dull with patches of packed snow. Heavy mist hangs over Lake Santeetlah below. We are on top of a snowy, scary world. It is fully night now, and the road has disintegrated into a single plowed lane, not necessarily on our side. The Turbo jumps around a bit as Hurley keeps rigid lane discipline. Which he wasn’t doing on the



Atlanta, Georgia » Escaping the mountains for some top-down weather.

Tail, I remind him. “Use the other lane!” “Another car might be coming.” “It’ll be going slower than you.”

The Turbo gets a tad squirrely, like, completely sideways, for a second. Hurley chuckles.

“This would have been nice about 3 p.m.,” he says.

This would have been nice about July.

Chunks of snow and ice fly up over the hood. “We *do* have snow tires, though, right?” Hurley asks. “I need my glasses.”

We stop so he can fish them from his briefcase, and we discuss turning back. OK—I discuss turning back. We see a 9M marker, which I assume means we are nine miles in, and I don’t want to tell him how far we still have to go. It suddenly occurs to me that the Cayenne should be leading, to knock down the snow for us. We reposition it in front. Despite the assist, the Cherohala isn’t a happy place to be this evening.

At the height of my nervousness, Hurley chuckles in the dark.

“No one will believe this,” he says. “I’ve never driven a Turbo in the snow.”

“In the fog,” I add.

“In the night. In the mountains. In the rain.”

Could be worse. I could be driving.

Thirty miles later, we pass into Tennessee, and suddenly there are two clean, plowed lanes. Fifteen minutes later, we punch out of the fog, the snow has virtually vanished, and we are driving through a dense Tennessee forest. “Oh my God!” we say in unison.

Less than an hour has passed since we began our ascent. (Later, before I do the math, I tell numerous people that it took us *at least two hours* to get through the snowy pass. Perhaps I am including post-traumatic-stress recovery time.)

“I want a steak,” says Hurley. “A big steak and a glass of nice wine.”

“How about just any wine?” I say, trying to manage expectations.

“All the restaurants will be closed,” he whines.

WEDNESDAY: WILL HISTORY REPEAT ITSELF?

On the way to the airport, Hurley looked at me for a moment, then said, “You’re not going to cry on me, are you?”

“No,” I sneered. “I’m not going to cry.” Ten seconds before, I had been thinking: whatever you do, don’t cry.

(One Lap For Practice, December 1994)

What can you say about the last noneventful miles and hours of a road trip? We arrive at Porsche headquarters in our filthy car to a very warm reception. Then we tour the training center, where a classroom full of service writers applauds Hurley and wishes him luck at Daytona. Hours later, the four of us blow town in four different directions, as if nothing happened.

But I’m thinking, Cherohala Skyway. Next July. Hurley might want to bring a Turbo for his revenge. **AM**