

## Ormand Family Activity

### March 2011: David's Trip to Pennsylvania, Maryland, and West Virginia

Usually, my company sends me to places I've been before. Often Huntsville, Alabama, and while I always love going there, I'm glad I didn't go last week when the killer tornadoes went through. Sometimes, I get sent to places where I've never been. Mid-March was one of those places, the Allegany Ballistics Lab (ABL) operated by Alliant Techsystems (ATK), just outside of Keyser, West Virginia. I am going to support a rocket motor test.

Keyser is right on the West Virginia-Maryland border at the far west end of the state, where the border makes the little jag southwest of Cumberland. WAY out in the boondocks. Which is where you might expect rocket motors to be built and tested. There are basically two ways for travellers



to get there: Fly into Baltimore or one of the Washington D.C. airports (like the other people going to the test with me), and deal with the confusing roads and heavy traffic of the Beltway area. Or fly into Pittsburgh, and drive about two hours through picturesque mountains. Here's a map that better depicts the area.



I've been to Baltimore and the D.C. area before, but I've never been to Pittsburgh, so it was an easy call. Plus, my flight arrives about 4:30pm, so I will have time to check out the city.

You can tell when the folk are proud of their city when they have a visitors' booth in the airport manned by friendly and knowledgeable guides. Pittsburgh is one of those places.\* The lady gives me a tour map and suggests some things I could do in two or three hours, including the Incline Railways and the Heinz Museum, and then provides some driving directions. Moments later I'm in the rental headed toward Downtown Pittsburgh.

(\* The Tucson airport has some pretty good area literature, but not a booth with a guide who can answer questions. It was actually literature I picked up at the airport returning from an earlier trip that clued me into the Mini-Time Machine museum!)



Pittsburgh is approached from the southeast via the Fort Pitt Tunnel. Cool. I'm being extra careful holding the camera on top of the steering wheel. Lots of traffic, no surprise. It's a long tunnel. Not much for photos inside, though...

My first objective is the Incline Railway. To get there, one has to go through the tunnel and cross the river, then pick your way through the city core, and take this bridge back across.





There are two railways, actually, originally built to ferry inhabitants and steelworkers to and from the ridge. I pick the Duquesne, as I believe from the map that I will get a better view. Had I more time, I would have done the other as well. \$4.50 (exact change) for a round-trip. I ride up with some locals returning home.

[www.duquesneincline.org](http://www.duquesneincline.org)

Later on, I take a picture of the railway from across the river, to give an idea of how long and steep it is. I'm pretty sure the incline railway on Lookout Mountain at Chattanooga is longer.



But also more scary. The cars on this railway are stepped, since the grade is pretty constant, unlike the railway at Lookout Mountain. My kids didn't care for that one, I think they could handle this.

I just realized; I had noticed the lights on the tracks when I was riding on the tracks,

but they are not visible in the dusk picture above. It must have to get pretty dark to see them from the city.

At the top, 50 cents gets you past a turnstile to see the works. Here's the geeky stuff: The railway was built in 1877 and was originally powered by a steam engine; now, after being restarted in 1962 by a preservation committee, it runs on a DC electric motor.



The coffin-shaped box right of center is the controller. A traveller runs on a threaded rod, and as the car approaches the station, the traveller engages a switch that slows the motor, and when it reaches the end of the run, another switch turns off the motor. The big cogwheel is original, of course, and has been maintained for continuous operation for more than a hundred years now!

But I didn't come up here to look at the machinery. Outside on the observation deck, under cloudy March skies, is the city of Pittsburgh. I am standing on the top of the ridge that minutes before I passed under through the tunnel. The Allegheny River flows down on the other side; the Monongahela River is the nearer one I crossed twice. Note the coal barges - it's a working river, and Pittsburgh is technically in the "Rust Belt". But as I will discover, the city has shed its reputation for urban blight and is a pleasant living urban core.





A closeup of the point of the confluence. The star shape is the outline of Fort Pitt, the reason for why Pittsburgh is here at all. The other thing is a *big* fountain, which I would be glad to see when it is working again.

The Allegheny and the Monongahela combine to form the Ohio River. This is where it begins! A few years ago, we crossed the Ohio at Cincinnati, after seeing the Creation Museum ([http://dlormand.us/family/fam\\_vac08\\_p7.pdf](http://dlormand.us/family/fam_vac08_p7.pdf))







Closeup of the Heinz Stadium across the river. I'm not a football person, so I'm guessing that the Pittsburgh Steelers play there. There is Steelers paraphernalia *everywhere* in the region! Right next to it is "Carnegie" something or other, and there's actually a submarine in the river beside it (outside the picture to the left), so I don't know if this is the

Carnegie Museum of Art or a tribute to Carnegie Steel. The steel industry is pretty much gone from the region; like the guide at the airport said, "we've traded steel for Heinz 57 Varieties"!

After a good while of looking around, it's time to leave and take advantage of the remaining daylight. Back down the tracks (there's those lights) to my rental car in the parking lot on the other side of the road. The incline railway is a "funicular", as a cable pulls it up, and the other car is a counterweight. I've just left the upper station, and the other red car has just left the lower station.





Back across the Monongahela, I explore the city. Not as tall as Dallas, not as pretty and comfortable as Fort Worth, but... more *real*, or "organic". Traffic is heavy but not as bad as Chicago, and it's quite pleasant to walk in. So I find a parking garage to dump the car and start walking.

They've done a pretty good job of reusing old buildings for new purposes. Little shops and theatres at street level, and lots of restaurants and bistros. Later, I ask my ATK friends what the regional cuisine is, and he answered "Italian". Makes sense; there are many pizza and hero sandwich shops downtown.





Yes, as well as the old standards...

The main street is Liberty. Southeast of Liberty is the "market" district, including, yes, Market Street. The fancy big-name stores are over here. Too bad no big-name stores want to relocate in Tucson; Lerner's was the last one, and they're gone now. Note the airwalk. There were several here and there, to keep the shoppers and workers out of the cold and snow in the winter. Minneapolis had those, too, as well as underground passages.





Odd street angles produce odd shaped buildings, like this "flatiron" style. I don't think it's entirely perspective that makes this building look terraced (upper stories smaller than lower ones). Pretty red brick and ornamental stonework amidst the concrete and steel and glass of the newer buildings - a pleasing contrast.

The northwest side of the city core is the "cultural district", with lots of theatres and studios and the like. There were many people dressed up for the evening on the way to the entertainments. After walking past many of these and taking note of the shows playing, I returned to the southern point to check out the park.

Which is where Fort Pitt stood. There's not much left - pretty much this blockhouse. Everything is closed now, of course.



The fort was a brick casement affair, as shown by this wall outside the museum. It has a plaque, but I can't tell if it is original, as it is some distance from the outline of the old fort out in the lawn. Or maybe this is something like Fort Smith, where the original fort is gone and some distance from where the later, larger stone fort was built.

I still have two, almost three hours to get to my hotel, and already night is descending. I stop in a little Italian shop and get a "stromboli" (a folded over pizza deal, like a calzone, only saucier) and start back to I-79 and I-68. It proves to be difficult to eat a stromboli in the car with one hand! Presently I get to the West Virginia border, where I find a tourist information rest area, wash my hands and get a tourist book. A little later I'm driving through the hills shrouded by thick clouds and a light drizzle. I am reluctant to go much above the speed limit under these conditions, but the locals are whipping past me like they were used to it or something. Interesting experience, but I can't see much of the landscape in the dark, and I'm glad to arrive safely at the hotel.

The next day I connect up with my buddies and we spend the day preparing for the next day's test at ATK's ABL facility at "Rocket Center". I discover that the border between Maryland and West Virginia is the Potomac River, and ABL is right on the banks! The river is a lot smaller than I saw it last year at Blossom Point! I also notice that a great many of the buildings and facilities at ABL are named in honor of Robert C. Byrd (the Pork King of the Senate for many years)! After the day's activities, we return to Maryland where we are staying (not really any hotels down here in Keyser), and I drive from my place in LaVale to Frostburg where they are staying to meet them for dinner.

LaVale is about 8 miles from Frostburg, and 2 miles from Cumberland. LaVale and Frostburg and Cumberland are on Highway 40, the Old National Highway, established by Congress in the 1700s, and later turned over to the state of Maryland to operate as a tollroad. The historic tollhouse is just inside LaVale on the way to Frostburg.





# RATES of TOLL

|  | Cents for miles |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|--|-----------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
|  | 1               | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 |
| Forevery Score of Sheep or Hogs.   | 1               | 2  | 3  | 4  | 4  | 6  | 6  | 7  | 6  | 8  |
| Forevery Score of Cattle.  | 2               | 4  | 5  | 7  | 8  | 10 | 12 | 13 | 15 | 16 |
| Forevery Horse and Rider.  | 1               | 2  | 2  | 2  | 2  | 3  | 3  | 4  | 4  | 4  |
| Forevery Dearborn, Chaise, Sleigh or Sled drawn by one horse or pair of oxen.  | 2               | 2  | 3  | 4  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 8  |
| Forevery Horse or pair of Oxen in addition.  | 1               | 2  | 2  | 2  | 2  | 3  | 3  | 4  | 4  | 4  |
| Forevery Chariot, Coach or Sleigh Pheton or Chaise With two Horses or 4 Wheels.  | 2               | 4  | 5  | 7  | 9  | 12 | 15 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| For the Carriages last Mentioned drawn With Four Horses.   | 11              | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 21 | 23 | 25 |
| Forevery led or drawn Horse, Mule or Ass.  | 1               | 2  | 2  | 2  | 2  | 3  | 3  | 4  | 4  | 4  |
| Forevery Carriage of pleasure by Whatever be it called, the same according to the number of wheels and horses drawing the same.                          | 2               | 3  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 4  | 4  | 5  | 5  | 12 |
| Forevery Cart or wagon whose wheels do not exceed three inches in breadth, drawn by one horse or pair of oxen.   | 2               | 3  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 4  | 4  | 5  | 5  | 12 |
| Forevery Cart or wagon whose wheels do not exceed three inches and does exceed four inches in breadth.   | 2               | 3  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 4  | 4  | 5  | 5  | 18 |
| Forevery horse or pair of oxen drawing the same wheels exceeding four and not exceeding six inches. Wheels exceeding six and not exceeding eight inches. | 1               | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  |
| All Carts or Wagons Whose wheels exceed eight inches in breadth. Free  |                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |

DAVID T. SHRIVER. Supt.

Clearly, a penny went a long ways in those days (hyuk hyuk).

Now, anyone including me would have thought "Frostburg" was named after the fact that the hills got "frosty" in the winter. Not so, it turns out; there was a man named Frost who acquired property after the National Highway went through and parcelled it out (similar to the Twinkenham district in Huntsville). I intentionally arrive in the town early to give it a quick look-over before I meet my friends.

Several big church buildings along Main Street.



Downtown Frostburg is actually up, on the side of a fairly steep hill. It seems a "Pinewood Derby" cart race is an annual event in the town. Lots of little shops, but not much parking. Frostburg also hosts a University, so there are lots of younger people here, and the sort of tavern places

students will frequent. The homes are just outside the downtown area, perched on steep hills; I wonder how the natives manage the brick and cobblestone streets when they are covered with snow most of the year.

Also here - "historic" Hotel Gunter.

More Up/Downtown, including the City Hall (the light building third down on the other side). A monument to limited local government (or so we hope). The valley beyond is visible over the roofs. Mr. Frost picked a scenic place for his town, but it sure makes for a unique urban area. Like Bisbee. Almost. Or Jerome. Not quite.



A real shock waited two blocks off Main Street on the other side. Certainly arouses my curiosity. BUT, it's still south of the Line - as a matter of fact, the Mason-Dixon line is the northern border of Maryland.

After dinner (in an upscale Italian restaurant) (with a long bar packed with student types), and an uncomfortable night (too much food, should have passed on dessert), we return to ABL for the test. It comes off successfully in the morning, and after a celebratory lunch with the team, I have the rest of the day to explore. So, do I see historic Cumberland - where Col. Washington commanded a troop - or do I see sights in West Virginia as described in the tourist book I picked up two days before? I decide "West Virginia", so south I go.

The road south for Keyser follows streams at the bottom of valleys, but after a while, the road hairpins up a ridge. At the top are these wind turbines that the geek has to photograph. A little ways farther is a giant coal-fired generating plant, with its very own artificial lake for a cooling pond. I figure



that the generating company has to offset its coal operation with "green" wind turbines in some proportion to avoid federal penalties. Also up in the hills I observe two underground coal mines, which is of course what West Virginia is famous for. I assume the generating plant is a prime customer of the adjacent mines.

Finally I arrive at my destination: Blackwater Falls State Park. The car is left in the visitors' center parking lot (the center is closed by this time, unbelievably), and a short climb down some trails and stairs brings me to this scene.



It is "blackwater" because there is a great deal of natural tannin leached into the water from vegetation. A similar effect makes the water on Mount Lemmon "sudsy". There are orange or brown streaks against the white of the falls.





After gazing at the falls for a good while (there are actually several falls tumbling down the slopes round about), I look over the rest of the park. Very nice, set up for group camping with cabins and a large lodge (serves as a convention or retreat center). At the very end is a parking place and a mile-long hiking trail that ends at a little observation platform over this typical West Virginia valley.

West Virginia is a very beautiful place. As I looked through the tourist book, there are many reasons to come back. Plus, I still want to look over Cumberland. But not on this trip. Hopefully I will return to this corner of America with more time and opportunity to explore.

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Ordinarily, my flights to Tucson on American Airlines go to Dallas/Fort Worth, and after crossing the Rincon Mountains east of Tucson and the Mississippi River between Dallas and Huntsville, there's really not much to see until the airplane crosses the Tennessee River on approach to Huntsville International. To get to Pittsburgh, however, I have to fly United Airways, for which Sky Harbor in Phoenix is a hub. On the way back from the East, I try some more aerial photography.

Ski slopes and a resort town in the Colorado Rockies.



As we approach Phoenix, we pass what I'm pretty sure is Lake Roosevelt, east of Phoenix and north of Globe.

Landing at Sky Harbor. There's Tempe and Arizona State University on the other side of the (artificially dam) Salt River.

