



The sole of a man, F6

The Daily Reflector

# Look

AT THE WAY WE LIVE

Trail follows footsteps of Jesus, F10



Sunday, June 15, 2008

F

## A friendship renewed

Nostalgia is a wistful desire to return to one's homeland.

To say that I'm wistful is a bit of a stretch. But I do, however, miss the town in which I grew up, especially during the summer.

Oakville, Ontario, is a quaint, historical suburb of the greater Toronto area, which includes some 4 million people.



KELLEY KIRK-SWINDELL

And summers are special in this town.

There's the strawberry festival at a local park on the Lake Ontario waterfront and Midnight Madness when all the merchants in the downtown core stay open until — obviously — midnight.

The streets are closed off and it becomes a big party with live music, clowns, food and great sales.

The gardens are lush and verdant with thick carpets of grass that tickle between your toes. People of all ages are out in droves enjoying the sun by walking their dogs, riding bikes or enjoying an ice cream cone with friends.

It's just a joyous time of year. I've not visited during the early summer since I moved to North Carolina in June eight years ago — until last week.

With my golf clubs and 9-month-old puppy Uno neatly packed into the car, I drove home. It was a trek through six states before reaching southern Ontario, but well worth the 13½-hour journey.

This summer visit gave me a chance to reminisce with an old friend.

Barb — she went by Barbie in her youth — and I spent the lazy days of summer on her front lawn turning cartwheels and back flips, relishing our freedom from school and the uniform that we wore each day. We'd ride our bikes through my neighborhood, swim, jump on the trampoline and simply play.

I'd not seen Barb in more than 15 years when we found each other once again on Facebook, a social-networking Web site similar to MySpace.

Reconnecting with my old friend was like sliding into my favorite pair of jeans.

She's still the same, and even looks like she did when we played softball together during our mid-teens, although she'd say that gravity has laid claim to a few body parts.

So many memories filed way back in the deep recesses of my mind Barb brought to the front. She recalled, in detail, my haircut from 1985, "you know, parted on one side Duran-Duran style, with the sticky-outies on the other side. And you had mirrored sunglasses and this sailor hat." She even had the photo to prove that I did indeed sport that particular look. She could even recite a phone number my parents had when I was 10, 844-1824.

During lunch together we giggled like we did during lunches at school and talked about our lives today. She's been married for six years to her husband Marty and they have a 4-year-old son Jackson.

While our lives have changed, the essence of what I cherished about this person so long ago is still there today. She's kind with a great sense of humor, caring, yet can point out the errors of your ways without being hurtful, and she's fun.

So many good times we've shared, and reconnecting with her during my summer visit home made me feel like a kid again.

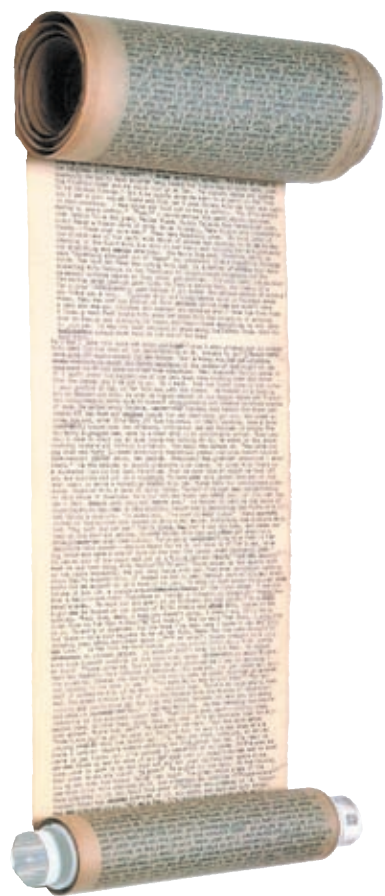
Contact Kelley Kirk-Swindell at 329-9596 or [kkirkswindell@coxnc.com](mailto:kkirkswindell@coxnc.com).



Jack Kerouac viewed A across from Thompkins [sic] Park 1953 New York, his handsome face looking into barroom door — This is best profile of his intelligence as I saw it Sacred, time of Subterraneans writing. Allen Ginsberg

New York Public Library

"JACK KEROUAC Avenue A across from Thompkins [sic] Park 1953 New York, his handsome face looking into barroom door — This is best profile of his intelligence as I saw it Sacred, time of Subterraneans writing." (Allen Ginsberg, photographer. NYPL, The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, Photography Collection. Reproduced courtesy of the Allen Ginsberg Estate.)



Cox News Service

**THE 120-FOOT-LONG** manuscript of "On the Road" belongs to Indianapolis Colts owner James Irsay, who bought it in 2001 for \$2.2 million from the Kerouac estate. He considers himself a guardian and has lent the scroll to several exhibits, including "Beatific Soul" at the New York Public Library and the recent exhibit, "On the Road with the Beats," at the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas, Austin.

## Mythic miles

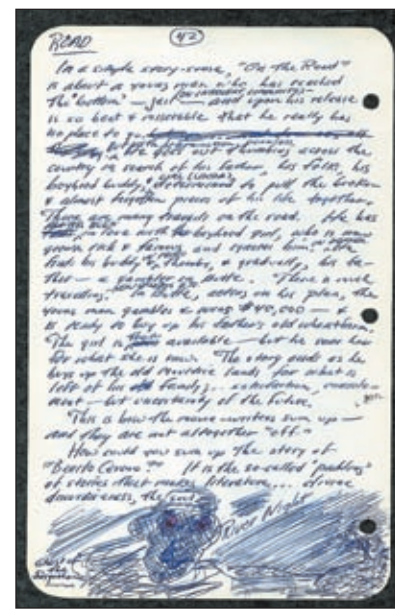
By Marion Blackburn  
Special to The Daily Reflector

Our American souls are restless. We long to go, to put distance between ourselves and everything familiar. New places, sights and people promise relief somehow for whatever's not going well back home.

So, we turn to our cars and head toward destinations unclear. We drive because the road eases the discomforts of routine and cushions us from things around us that have lost their shine. We drive to find the inner places we can't reach any other way.

With \$4-a-gallon gas, and for infinite, unnamed reasons, we're still moving.

That's why Jack Kerouac's hitchhiking, Hudson-driving epic, "On the Road," passes the pack as our great American novel, capturing our hunger for distance even in a summer like this one, when we hate the cost but find ourselves compelled to go.



NYPL, Berg Collection

**A PAGE** of Jack Kerouac's notes for "On the Road."

Legend has it Kerouac wrote "On the Road" in a coffee-driven frenzy over three weeks in April 1951. For once, the legend is true.

A car trip seems like the best solution for just about any problem. Maybe that's why Jack Kerouac's 'On the Road' is a towering novel, and the legend of its creation an enduring tale of momentary brilliance.

Yet, as the book's narrator Sal Paradise might say, the full version of events was far more "crazy and cock-eyed and extremely strange" than that. Even the manuscript has taken its own road to fame and was nearly chewed to pieces by a dog. Today, it is in private ownership.

It's hard to imagine a world before "On the Road," but Kerouac and his Beat friends were revolutionary in their choices, their lives and their writing. They counted among their numbers Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, William S. Burroughs and other poets and madmen in the years just after World War II and before the flower-child 1960s. A compulsive note-taker, Kerouac chronicled their out-of-control episodes and cross-country trips, noting every border town and unbelievable character he met.

Along the way he developed a new ideal for writers: *The secret of writing is the rhythm of urgency*, he wrote.

See **KEROUAC**, F2

## Beat writer called eastern N.C. home in the 1950s

Rocky Mount appears as 'Testament, Va.' in 'On the Road'

By Marion Blackburn  
Special to The Daily Reflector

**Rocky Mount** You'd never know it leaving town on West Mount Drive that you're about to pass a gem of a house.

The architecture is nothing fancy. Just a one-story, 1940s farmhouse. Nor is the landscape, straggling grass in front with a backyard suitable for a garden. The damask blue exterior is sub-

dued but cheery.

It's hard to believe America's Beat hero, Jack Kerouac, author of "On the Road," once lived here. He stayed with his sister, Caroline, or "Nin," for months at a time during the lean years before "On the Road" was published, rambling through the Nash County fields, penning letters to Allen Ginsberg and other literary standouts.

They rented the cottage from Sarah Langley, who lived in the family's homeplace next door. Mrs. Langley and her children spent hours with the Blakes and

See **HOUSE**, F2



Photo by Marion Blackburn

**THE ROCKY MOUNT HOUSE** where Jack Kerouac lived during the 1950s. Today, the crossroads location is called West Mount, but in those days, it was Big Easonburg Woods.