

## Milwaukee (*Wisconsin, 16-18 Nov'07*)

Dilip and I landed at the General Mitchell Airport in the morning of 16 Nov, Friday. We rented a car and decided to sightsee a bit, before heading for my sister, Emy's, place. The car had GPS (Global Positioning System). I generally am annoyed with GPS. I don't know if it has anything to do with the dislike of some random lady telling me what to do! I also believe it interrupts a conversation and is pretty confusing till you get used to its ways. But by the end of the trip, I became a convert. As we had to deviate from our meticulously planned schedule, the 'GPS lady' proved helpful.

Our initial plan was to visit the Miller Brewery for a tour and beer sampling and then head for 'Cave of the Mounds' limestone caves near Madison, about 1.5hours from Milwaukee. The tours at both these places finished by 2-3pm. Our plans went awry when road construction forced us to make random turns and exits, thus losing our way. The GPS lady didn't help as she had no idea about such dynamic conditions. Finally we had to depend on me, the navigator, and my map reading skills.



We got to the Miller Brewery all right. But missed the 10:30am tour we had planned to catch. Instead we took the 11:30am one. The tour was free and walked us through the process of beer making and ended in the Miller Inn for sampling 3 types of their beers- Miller Lite, Miller High Life and Miller Chill. The production was mindboggling- the amount of beer cases they produce a day is unimaginable! The tour was interesting, but the guide failed to have the audience hanging on to his every word. Though questions were encouraged, nobody asked any and the tour seemed a little impersonal to me. Of course, I am comparing it to the guide at the Scharffen Berger Chocolate Factory in Berkeley, who was very good at taking the audience with her on the ride.

After Miller Brewery, we realized that we wouldn't make it to 'Cave of the Mounds' in time for their only tour of the day at 2pm. So we changed plans and decided to visit the Harley Davidson Motor Factory. The GPS lady helped to get us there efficiently.

We made it to the factory just in time for their last tour of the day at 1pm. Because of the great noise on the factory floor, the guide spoke into a mike and each of us had a hearing aid. This made the tour a monologue and even less personal than the miller Brewery tour. Never the less, the care that goes into each step of production was very interesting. Cameras were not allowed inside the factory. But we could use them in the Tour Center, where they were many models on display. The first time I had heard of



Harley Davidson, was at college in Chengannur during my B.Tech ragging days. One of the seniors, a huge Harley Davidson fan, asked me to write a love letter to Harley Davidson. I guess he was looking for poetic speak about what was obviously *his* love. And I said “OK... *but Harley who?!?*” Can’t blame me! I had never heard of the machines before. In fact, I still think it is the guy thing! Anyway, the senior was so disgusted that I didn’t have to do the assignment after all. And now, sitting atop one of those machines, I was reminded of that first introduction to a Harley Davidson ☺

Our next stop was Emy’s & Bijoy Chettan’s home and we spent the rest of the day playing with my nephew Mathew (he also insisted that ‘Yema’ give him a bath that day; one of my firsts again), hogging on Amma’s and Emy’s cooking, listening to my niece Neha cooing to herself etc.



The next day, we celebrated Jiju Chettan’s birthday at his apartment. It was a rare get together of five maternal cousins and their spouses in USA.

On 18 Nov, Sunday, we were all busy getting ready for Neha’s baptism at the St.Mary’s Faith Community church in Milwaukee. After lunch, we had to get to the airport to catch our flight back to San Francisco. Mathew wasn’t happy with our departure at all. I would have loved to stay on and ‘konji-fy’ with him! But, routine must go on...

(Snaps are at <http://dilipmary.shutterfly.com>)