

MY MOVE

July 22, 2021

It's by far the hardest thing I've ever done. . . to be so in love with you and so alone. No wait, that's a John Denver song. The hardest thing *I've* ever done is drive a 26-foot Penske truck across the Western United States in the middle of the summer with four cats in the cab—three of them loose. It is supposed to be sixteen hours by car, but it took me more than thirty. On many of the passes I was only going 30mph, due to the heavy load. The trailer was jammed to the gills, and I couldn't have put another tunafish sandwich in there. I had to leave one sofa, my old TV, and my Vespa. But, good news, I sold the Vespa to one of the movers, in an even trade for the move.

I had done this before, 21 years ago, when I drove a 20-foot Penske from Austin to Boston. And that time I had towed my car. I knew not to do that again, but that was about the only good decision I made. I probably told myself then “never again”, but I guess I forgot. Besides, I really had no choice: the cheapest quote I got this time from professional movers was \$13,000, which was not doable.

About the cats: I had planned to use three cat carriers, putting the two large kittens in the same one. But UPS misdelivered one of them, and the cats chewed through one in a matter of hours. If you ever do something like this, buy the hard carriers, not the soft. The cats were actually pretty good. They didn't mess up any motel rooms, which was nice of them. Of course I knew to travel with a litter box, which helped. The girl kitten meowed for an hour every morning, to the point I wanted to toss her out the window, but I didn't. She almost jumped out of the moving truck, though, and I caught her with one hand. She squeezed through that gap in the window, and was almost out before I grabbed her.

I had over 50 painting boxes, double and triple packed, some of them very large, and 120 book boxes. Also sixteen bicycles, four easels, a piano, and a functioning water slide. Just kidding on the last one, but everything else is true.

I had to move in with a friend and am now sharing a 1500sqft house with him. I was previously by myself in 1700sqft, but the house was being sold and I had to vacate. Given the current market I can no longer afford 1700sqft anywhere, except possibly Wilkes Barre, PA. So I had to move about half my stuff into climate-controlled storage. I filled two 10x10 units.

The weather here is sweltering. It was 107 last weekend and is about 100 now. But hey, it's a dry heat. No clouds have been seen here since 1908. But this is a paradise compared to Carson City, NV, which I drove through on Monday. That is Mark Twain's old haunt, if you remember. Not much for him to crow about there now. The wind was blowing about 60 miles an hour from the south, enough to shake a 20-ton truck and make a driver fear for his life. And the wildfire smoke is thick as peanut butter on the eastern slopes of the Sierras. But once we came down into Tahoe, the smoke cleared, the wind died, and we were in a rich person's dream. It was like Aspen, but hotter and bigger. But we had to keep going. No stepping from the Penske to hobnob with the joggers, bikers and boaters of Tahoe.

The downhill side of that pass is the longest bad dream ever for someone who has already driven 12 hours. I commented at the time that it would be quicker to descend from Mount Everest. Then I missed my exit, which was not marked, went over another pass I didn't need to (due to bad directions from Google), and various other indignities I don't have to try your patience with. Trying my patience with them was plenty. It is enough to say that by the time I arrived I was only a short drop-kick from

the local sanitarium.

After a few hours of fitful sleep I had to drum myself awake and live a second nightmare: unloading that big yellow beast. Even with hired help it took eight hours. The nearest storage was an hour away, and we couldn't just drive up and unload. We had to unload and then cart everything another hundred yards through winding corridors and past alligator pits. OK, there weren't any alligator pits, but it seemed like there were. I figured the best thing to do after the worst day of my life was try to top it by sweating profusely for hours while skipping lunch and dinner. You know the phrase "cotton-mouth thirsty"? I found out what that is for the first time. At one point I nearly passed out. In the last two hours I was loading more boxes than the professionals. Why? Because I had to get the truck in by 7:30pm, and I didn't want to have to deal with it another day.

After turning in the truck, I was so exhausted my arms were numb. My hands are still tingling 48 hours later.

I would like to give a shout out and big thanks to Mike Hogan, guitarist extraordinaire and human brick, who volunteered to drive my car as back-up to the Penske. He also filled most of my book boxes while I was filling the painting boxes. Without his help I literally don't think I would have made it. I would have died or cracked up somehow. For real. It was that bad.

I would also like to thank mover Justin Kaysing, 6'5" of blond Taos muscle who charged me half what the damned California movers charged.

Still, even while doing a lot of this myself, I have spent myself into the poor house. My credit cards are maxxed out and donations are flagging since I haven't been writing. I realize this is a bad time to run my second fund drive of the year, for that reason, but I have to do it anyway. As you know, by fund drive I mean I post a reminder to feed the web kitty, if you can. I will not pester you with pop-up ads or any other ads, prepper products, vitamins, or coffee mugs with my picture on them. Just this one-paragraph reminder to continue the generous support you have given me in the past. I am back on the computer and will soon be back to work. I am posting a guest paper today and will have a paper of my own up soon. I trust the rest of you are weathering the storm better than I am this month, and that things will turn around soon. Regardless, keep your head up, since Solar Minimum is over and charge will be rising for many years. As the sun wakes up, so will mankind.