

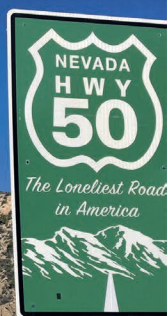
'David Reynolds is a writer of calm, quiet brilliance' *Daily Express*

'Reynolds is the perfect man for the route' *Observer*

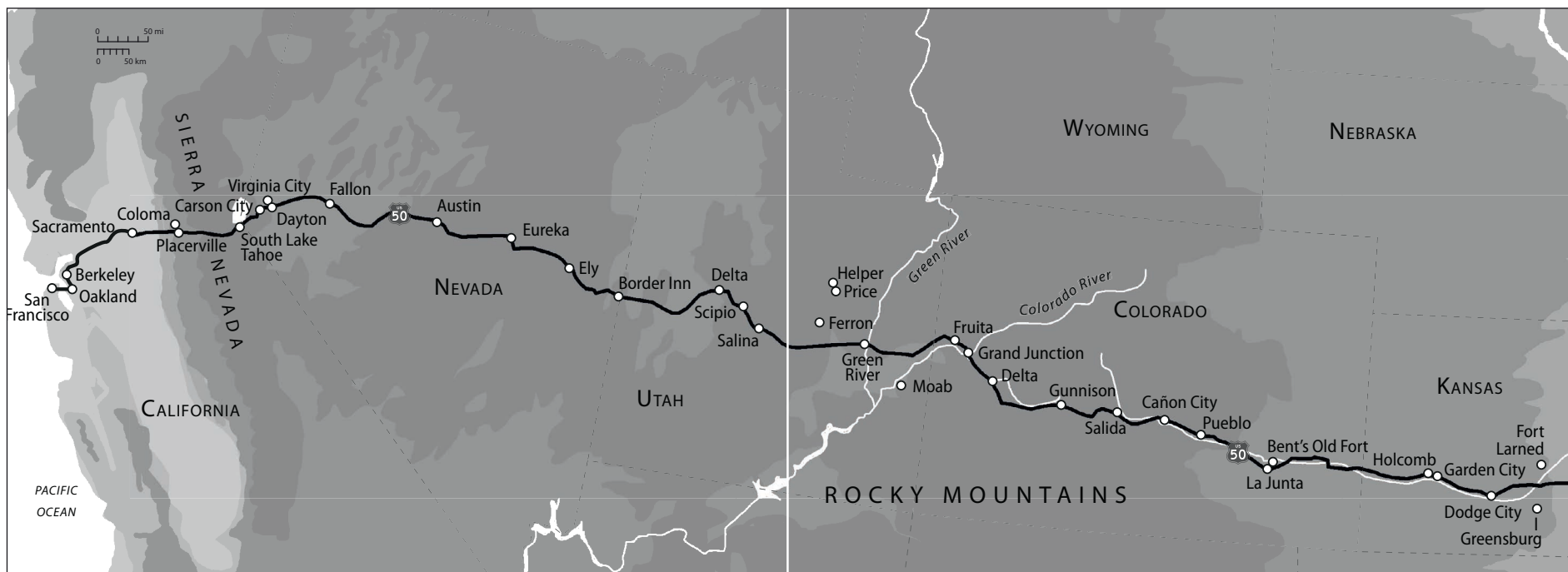
DAVID REYNOLDS

SLOW ROAD *to San Francisco*

Across the USA
from Ocean to Ocean



'Reynolds is the perfect man for the route' *Observer*



Selected Extracts

I've been fascinated by America since I was a child. I had a cowboy outfit and toy guns, which I put beside my dinner plate so I could shoot at the baddies when the Cisco Kid and the Lone Ranger were on TV. My interest grew through comics, books, music and movies until I discerned – and developed a yearning for – those open spaces and empty roads which speak to a form of freedom not found in England.

David Reynolds, Spring 2020

The US Highways, also known as US Routes, were planned and built in the 1920s and early 1930s because cars had become commonplace and because, in the Great Depression, men needed work. They formed a grid of more than a hundred two-lane roads which crossed the country from east to west and north to south. Beginning in the 1950s, they were gradually superseded by multi-lane Interstate Highways, which, with central reservations and slip roads for entering and leaving, encouraged speed, filled up with trucks and bypassed towns. William Least Heat-Moon, author of what is perhaps the best American road book, *Blue Highways*, wrote sagely, 'Life doesn't happen along interstates. It's against the law.'

Many of the old US Highways, including Route 66, have been decommissioned; parts of them lie buried under interstates or have been allowed to grass over, and, even where a stretch of road survives, their distinctive shield-shaped signs, with the highway's number, have been removed because short lengths of road are not US Highways. But US Highway 50 is still a US Highway. It does what it was designed to do; it crosses the country, is still pretty much intact and has shields beside it all the way.

On the Beach

A lifeguard in red shorts climbs up to his chair. Still standing, he looks both ways and waves to other lifeguards; they are all along the beach, sitting in their high, white-painted chairs, spaced about a hundred yards apart. Yet no one is swimming, and I have to swim here – from this beach. I promised myself and others that I would, before I set off from England on this odd escapade. An hour ago, as I drove in creeping traffic through thunder, lightning and blinding rain, it seemed even crazier. Why was I doing this, and why was I doing it on my own?

Grey clouds linger; it's not warm on this August day. The water is cold but not too cold. I step into the sea and advance slowly, letting the water rise up my legs an inch at a time – I've never been able to charge in with a lot of splashing. Eventually, when the water reaches my waist, I take courage and a breath, plunge and go right under. It feels great! Refreshing! Clean water, no seaweed, no stones. Just sand and gentle waves. I dive and go under, swim a few strokes, turn on my back, float and gaze at the sky, at the streaks of silver and even blue in the grey that marked the storm. The lifeguard has said that he is not allowed to use anyone's phone or camera. I fetch my phone from him and ask a man who is standing nearby with a child to take my photo, and run back into the shallows. The man looks glum, but he takes two pictures. They're not great but they're mementoes, proof of something significant – of me in the Atlantic Ocean at Ocean City, Maryland – and if all goes well, they will be complemented in seven weeks' time by photos of me in the Pacific at San Francisco.

The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad

I find the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor Center beside a narrow road surrounded by green fields, woods, ponds and marshland – just a few miles from Bucktown and Harriet's birthplace. It is a handsome, low, modern building, opened in 2017, funded and run jointly by the National Park Service and the State of Maryland, and set within another tribute to Tubman, the seventeen-acre Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park. On this sunny afternoon, the setting is idyllic, and again hard to square with the evil of slavery. Inside the Center I learn that, when Tubman lived nearby as a girl, as well as doing farm work and standing for hours in freezing water trapping muskrats for their thick winter fur, she worked with her father cutting down trees, turning them into timber and hauling it to local wharves. That work gave her the knowledge and contacts that later enabled her to set up escape routes from here in eastern Maryland to, initially, the free state of Pennsylvania.

It is also hard to accept that this slave system held sway so recently. Slavery was abolished in 1865. Tubman herself escaped to freedom in Philadelphia in Pennsylvania in 1849. Between then and the beginning of the Civil War in 1861, she made thirteen trips during which she led seventy slaves from her old homeland to freedom, many of them to Canada, where they were safer than in the free states of the United States, from which they could be returned to slavery. She also helped another fifty slaves to escape by advising them where to go, how to hide and so on. She became known as 'Moses' and said many years later, 'I never ran my train off the track and I never lost a passenger.'

I gaze at a cradle made from a hollowed-out tree and imagine it lying on an earth floor in a flimsy shack, a baby asleep, a young mother nearby and a tired father rocking the cradle with his foot. The Center is designed with reverence – is almost a shrine, dimly lit in places, with modern brass sculptures, some of Tubman herself, and a movie that shows a succession of eminent people paying tribute to her character and achievements. Another movie re-enacts some of her great escapes, including cliff-hanging moments when she and those she is leading came close to being

discovered. Old photographs, documents and objects are mixed in with huge modern colour illustrations, some of which have a three-dimensional element – a wooden gate or the prow of ship jutting from them.

The civil war between the northern and southern states, the Union and the Confederacy, was fought on the issue of slavery. Harriet Tubman moved south with the Union troops, working first as a nurse and a cook and then as an armed scout and spy. A sculpture here shows her leading the famous Raid on Combahee Ferry, an action that defeated a detachment of the Confederate Army and freed 750 slaves, many of whom joined the Union Army.

I spend an hour wandering around and visiting the shop, which has a wall filled with serious books about slavery and the Civil War, alongside Harriet Tubman finger puppets, key rings and rulers. Then I walk across lush grass to a picnic building with tables and a sink with running water. I look out towards a still lake in which clouds and sky are reflected; beyond is a field bordered by trees: 'Countryside preserved,' as the woman who ran the shop put it, 'as it would have been back in the slave days.'

A Quiet Sundae in Hillsboro

The heat continues into the evening as I drive west towards Hillsboro. The sky is light blue. Wispy clouds lie against the sun in the south. The road is two-lane, traffic-free, a smooth ride across the flood plain of Paint Creek, a tributary of the Scioto, which itself flows south to the Ohio River. To my left, wooded hills rise above fields, and up there, among trees, I glimpse a road, perhaps a lane, winding upwards, like a thread dropped on a carpet. Half a mile on, I turn onto that lane, and find a field of deep green maize as far as the treeline, a white-painted farmhouse and a Dutch barn with a hipped, flyaway roof. I drive on up through woods, bright greens and yellows where the sun falls to my right, bottle greens in the murk to my left. The lane flattens and straightens, maize to both sides, a grand house, smaller houses, all painted white. A stone needle, smaller than trees nearby, points skywards behind a stone wall: a grave or perhaps a war memorial. I turn the car and return to 50.

Now the road is a series of switchbacks and curves. In a hollow beneath trees, black cattle stand sleek and still, waiting perhaps for the cool of night-time. At the crest of a hill sits a low building with a giant ice-cream cone jutting from its gable end. I stop and find an old man behind a sliding window serving an eclectic range of ice creams, sandwiches, burgers and hot dogs. I order a cherry sundae and, after a few grunts and some whistling from inside the window, receive a bowl containing a helter-skelter of soft vanilla ice cream, soused and swimming in cherry sauce. I sit in an outdoor shelter eating this delight with a plastic spoon. Across from me, a man with three children, two boys and a girl, allows them to punch one another for a couple of minutes before shouting, 'That's enough!' The children go quiet and scrape up the remains of their ice creams. All four climb into a beaten up, low-slung, matt-black car, which chugs for a minute like a fleet of Harleys before hurtling out of the car park.

As the noise subsides, the only other occupant of the shelter, an elderly woman with cheeks like small apples, says, 'You enjoyin' that?'

'Yes. Delicious,' I say. 'Creamy... and plenty of it.'

She licks her lips – she is eating an ice cream from a cone – and smiles. 'I live down the road. Most days, I can't resist an ice cream.'

Soon she stands up and says goodbye. And, being English, I expect her to walk to her home down the road. But, instead, she gets into a maroon Datsun and drives east on Route 50.

It turns out that the Buckeye Dairy Bar, where I ate the cherry sundae, is on the eastern edge of Hillsboro, where I hope to spend the night. I follow 50 through the town, up and down several hills – which, surely, give the place its name. There are two motels. I choose one on the side of a hill, where the cheerful Asian proprietor tells me that, because it is Sunday, Hillsboro's bars and restaurants are closed.

I eat almonds and Walmart rosemary crackers in my room. Later I drive around in the dark. A gas station advertises liquor. Inside, the liquor department is closed, locked. A sympathetic cashier shrugs: she can't sell it on Sundays; the owner forbids it. Downtown, street lights reflect from shop windows – and there is a sprinkling of rain. On a straggling cross street, I come to Burger King where a woman sits at a window, ready to bring me a whopper and fries; I wouldn't even have to get out of the car. I am tempted and may return. I keep on to the edge of town and find a gas station whose owner – bless him or her – treats Sunday like every other day. I come away with a large can of IPA and a pastrami sandwich.

I wake next morning, and soon remember that Cincinnati, the first big city since Washington DC, is just sixty miles away. Before leaving Hillsboro, I drive back to the town centre, the two or three blocks around the junction of Main Street (which is also US 50) and High Street that are Hillsboro's downtown. Last night this area was dead. Now, on Monday morning, it's all heat, noise, movement, people and cars, even at ten o'clock. Policemen are loitering outside Momma's West Main Street Café, and their car is parked in front. I go into the café anyway, because it looks good and it's clearly popular. It's a big space, about half full, plenty of tables; a waitress shows me to one – and I ask about the police, half-hoping a juicy crime has been committed.

'Oh, they come here most days. Have a coffee, maybe a Danish.'

She brings coffee straight away – and I order my favourite American breakfast: eggs, bacon and hash browns.

'How do you like your eggs?' she asks.

'Over easy... or is it easy over? I can never remember.'

'Over easy.' She smiles and writes on her pad. 'Are you from Australia?'

I smile. I have to. 'No. England.'

'Really! Cool! How do you want the bacon cooked?'

'Oh-oo. Crispy, please.'

'Would you like mushrooms with that?'

'Sure.'

'Tomato?'

'Er... yeah.'

'And do you want toast with that, and jelly?'

'Er... yes. That'd be nice.'

She walks off. I take a leaflet about Mound City from my bag and spread it on the table in front of me.

And a voice says, 'Waiters, waitresses always ask how you want it cooked.' A man sitting at a table against the wall, diagonally across the aisle from mine, is looking at me. 'Grilled, I always say.' He laughs.

I laugh.

'I heard you're from England. You just travelling through?'

I explain that I'm driving slowly along Route 50 – I point towards the street – to California.

He nods and asks questions. 'Good road,' he says. 'Beautiful, some of that scenery. I ain't been all the way, but when you get to the Rockies, that'll be somethin'.'

The waitress brings my eggs and bacon. I munch a forkful and glance at the friendly man. He's not young – early seventies perhaps – neat and fit, close-cropped hair, a sharp jawline, and dapper in a black T-shirt and black jeans, all clean and ironed. He looks a bit like President Eisenhower. He's buttering some toast. Will we talk again? I prepare another forkful.

'You know,' he says, 'the only reason Route 66 is popular is because of the song.'

I nod. My mouth is full.

'It isn't that great a road – and a lot of it is gone. Not there.'

I swallow quickly. 'You're right. I've read about that – and I saw it on a TV series.'

'50 is a better road. I like 50.'

He asks about my rental car. I tell him – and he approves of Chevrolet. He himself has an old black Hyundai – he turns and points towards the street – which is very reliable, and a 1992 four-door pick-up with which he's also very happy.

'That's old,' I say.

'Yes, but the new ones aren't so good. Fancy, but not reliable.' He shakes his head almost imperceptibly. 'I've got a forty-two-inch mower attachment, which I can't use because my wife grows flowers and things everywhere.' He says this in a matter-of-fact way, without resentment.

Over an hour or so, I find out a lot about this man. He is eighty-two years old. He comes from Hillsboro, but spent much of his life working as an engineer in Tennessee. 'No degree,' he says with a grin, 'but if you do engineering, you're an engineer.' He has two sons, a granddaughter and a four-year-old grandson. Both sons are mechanics, one of them a genius who works for Texaco on new projects and collects vintage small tractors called Cub Cadets, of which he has fourteen.

When I finish eating, I move to another table – against the wall, facing his – so I can hear him better. Then I learn that Lloyd – I asked his name, Lloyd Satterfield – had poor hearing as a child; he sat next to the teacher in school so as to hear her. 'When I was six, a doctor put stuff over both my ears and told me to swallow. Was like an explosion in my head. It blew my Eustachian tubes open.'

'Wow,' I say. 'That must have been quite a moment.'

He nods, 'Yep.' Then sips some coffee and says, 'I like classical music, orchestral, some country – and big bands: Tommy Dorsey. I don't like Elvis. I went to his house. That man had no taste. Red shag carpet. Yellow walls.'

While we both have our coffee mugs refilled, he tells me about a local sheriff who, a few years ago, was thrilled to be asked to appear as an extra

in a movie that was being filmed around Hillsboro. Lloyd smiles just a little as he goes on. 'The man had always wanted to be in a movie. To celebrate, he got very drunk, crashed his car and died.'

'Oh, no!' I say.

'Yep!' He raises his hands. 'So he didn't achieve his lifetime's dream.'

We both swallow some coffee. Then Lloyd goes on, 'Another sheriff went out to a call about a shooting in a remote wood. And he took his wife with him, which he never did usually.' He pauses. 'Well, when they got there, she was shot dead and he was wounded.'

'No! Oh my God!'

'Yep. And local people think that sheriff set it up with hired killers to get rid of his wife – and that his wounding was a mistake, or maybe deliberate to avoid suspicion.' He shakes his head. 'It was strange. He *never* took his wife with him on police work.'

'*You* think he set it up?'

He shrugs and pulls a face – and says nothing.

'Did he get away with it?'

'Yeah! He moved away someplace.' He shakes his head again.

And soon he leaves with a firm handshake. 'You have a great trip. I'm sure you will.'

On the edge of Hillsboro a sign points to Hillsboro Ind. Park. I follow it, thinking it will lead to somewhere associated with Indians, only to find Hillsboro Industrial Park.

At the Polo Sports Lounge

Inside Motel 6, the receptionist seems gloomy. And when she sees my driving licence, showing the Union Jack and my address in London, she becomes grumpy as well, shrugging her shoulders and declaring, 'An Englishman ripped me off six hundred dollars.' She stares at me as if I might be him.

'That's *terrible*,' I say. 'But I would never do that. Not all Englishmen would do that. That's really bad.' She is still staring at me – and holding my driving licence in the air as if it were damning evidence. 'I'm really sorry that an Englishman did that.' Still she's staring. 'If I knew who it was, I'd try to get your money back.'

'Well,' she lowers her hand and shakes her head. 'It was very upsetting.'

'I'm really sorry.'

I think she has accepted that it wasn't me. Perhaps she has asked herself why, if it were me, I have turned up looking for a room. She is looking down at the motel's register.

'What happened?' I say.

She writes in the register and deals with my credit card. 'Room 251, upstairs.' She hands me a key, scratches her neck and looks me in the eye. 'Well... I got to know him online. We became very friendly and, after two years, he said he wanted to send me some gifts: some items of jewellery, a purse, other things.' She glances out of the window towards the remains of the sunset. Remembering is clearly painful. 'Nothing came. Then I was contacted by US mail and asked to pay a hundred dollars to get the gifts; I thought it was a revenue charge – customs duty, you know? This happened again, and then again, until I had paid six hundred dollars, but I never received the gifts.' She looks back at me, shakes her head and looks down. 'So I gave up. I'd been fooled.'

'Well, the worst thing is that you were misled... deceived, I mean.' She must have become fond of this English blackguard.

'Yep,' she says. She looks up at me for a second, and then down again. For her it was a romance; maybe she had hopes of a new life away from Motel 6. 'There's no elevator. The stairs are over there.'

'I'm sorry you went through that.' I turn away and wheel my suitcase towards the stairs.

Later, when I ask if she can recommend a restaurant or bar where I might get something to eat, she is still a little edgy. But she fills me in on the Hutchinsons: we are in South Hutchinson, which, her expression betrays, isn't as classy as plain Hutchinson, which is up the road and across the river.

'Which river is that?'

'Arkansas.'

'Oh, right. That's a big river.'

'Yep. Goes to Wichita that way' – she points behind to her right – 'and Dodge that way' – she points towards the car park. And she mentions two or three restaurants in Hutchinson.

I like the sound of the Polo Sports Lounge – partly because it stays open late; it's already half-past eight.

She tells me how to get there. 'Once you're across the river, Hutchinson is on a grid. You need Thirtieth Avenue and Main.'

There's a space at the small, square bar. I ask the man sitting next to it if it's taken.

'It is – by you,' he says loudly. I thank him and sit down. His name is John, and on my other side, my right, is a man called Dave, who introduces himself.

They are both middle-aged and white. John has short-cropped hair. Dave has well-cut grey hair and a strong, handsome face.

They ask what an Englishman is doing in Hutchinson and I give the usual answer: driving across the country, Route 50 to San Francisco.

I look at the menu and ask about the fish: 'Mahi mahi. What is that?'

'It's good,' says Dave. 'It was probably caught in the ocean around Hawaii. But what's really good tonight is the pasta special with seafood. I've got that on order.'

A dark-haired man, who has evidently been standing behind us, leans in and says to me, 'Tonight my pasta special is especially special.' He

smiles – and I assume he is the chef.

I order a small IPA and the pasta special. The dark-haired man introduces himself as Jason, and then speaks to Dave. From this I learn that Dave's brother has died, just this week, and that he is the second of his brothers to have died. 'Just me and my sister left,' he tells Jason.

When Jason leaves, I tell Dave that I'm sorry about his brother. 'It must be hard,' I say.

'It's hard.' He raises his hands and shrugs. 'He was sick. We knew that. The funeral wasn't good. And I didn't much like the obit. I didn't get a chance to give my opinion. My brother's children organised it. Here people are buried three days after they die, almost as a rule. So there isn't much time to get things right.'

Dave was in the military for twenty-four years, and is now fifty-four. 'I specialised in dealing with prisoners of war pretty much my whole career.' He worked in France, Germany and Italy, but not the UK, and for much of his career he trained military prison warders.

I ask if he was in Iraq.

'Yep. I arrived soon after Abu Ghraib. Was horrible.' He isn't looking at me, but I can see his eyes have narrowed into a squint, and his left fist – the one I can see – is almost imperceptibly clenching and unclenching. 'Should never have happened.' He sips from a glass of red wine. 'There were a lot of things we learned from that. One was' – he jabs his finger down towards the bar – 'realise how easily what you do can turn up on the internet.' He turns towards me. 'Of course, people should never treat prisoners like that. But if they're tempted to do something...' – he pauses – 'inappropriate, they should remember it'll show up sometime.'

Somehow we get to talking about politics. 'I voted for Obama, against McCain, because I didn't like Sarah Palin. I liked McCain, but he made a mistake in choosing Sarah Palin as his running mate.'

'So are you a progressive Republican? Is that right?'

'Yes.' He smiles. 'Now. Whaddya think of this? I came up with this pun about McCain versus Trump: "The lion of the Senate will be remembered long after the lyin' of the White House is long gone.'" He laughs. 'Whaddya think?'

I smile. 'It's good. Yeah.'

'It's not good. You're too polite.' He laughs again. 'It's just funny, if it's anything. Things like that come into my head. I don't know why.'

'So you're not keen on Trump?'

'No. I'm not.' He speaks quietly and moves his eyes from side to side – which seems to mean you have to be careful what you say. 'It's the first time in history we've had a president like this, who isn't a politician, who makes so many crazy decisions.'

'Do you think Trump will be impeached?'

'Quite possibly, if the Democrats get enough seats in Congress.'

'So then you would have Pence. How would that be?'

A plate of pasta, thick with squid, shrimp and clams, is put down in front of Dave, along with cutlery wrapped in a napkin. He pulls out a fork and prongs a pair of shrimps. 'Pence is an ass-licker; he's right there behind Trump. He would be more conventional as a president, but he has very right-wing religious views. It'd be different – perhaps better.'

My food arrives. Dave says, 'Isn't there a guy called Johnson who's causing trouble in your country?'

'You mean a fattish guy with ridiculous blond hair?'

'Yeah! That's him.'

We order more drinks and keep talking. Dave recommends that I go to Greensburg, a town further west and about twenty miles south of 50. 'It was flattened by a Tornado F5 in 2007. It's now been rebuilt on ecological lines. It's incredible what they've done there – well worth going to see.'

'OK. Sounds interesting. What does F5 mean?'

'It's the highest rating – the most destructive tornadoes. With winds over 200 miles an hour. Almost every building in Greensburg was blown down, or away. People were killed – ten or eleven, I think.' He sips his wine. 'Go have a look. That town is now something new, something hopeful – if you know what I mean.'

The John who was there when I arrived has gone. Another John, a skinny, bearded man, has turned up and is talking to Dave from across the bar about a local matter, of which I know nothing. I stop listening

and stare blankly at a screen showing American football – until I hear bearded John's voice raised and a little angry. He is saying that statues of Confederate heroes, like General Robert E. Lee, should be left where they are because they are part of history; moves to have them taken down are liberal, PC nonsense.

Dave points out that most of these monuments were put up in the 1920s – decades after the Civil War whose military heroes they are supposed to celebrate; Dave says that they were put there to reinforce white supremacy and the laws that enforced segregation.

I can see that John isn't really listening. However, he calms down and they talk about segregation here, in Hutchinson, and whether there were Ku Klux Klan marches in the city in the 1950s and early 1960s – when segregation was being threatened by the civil rights movement.

I'm startled at this mention of the Ku Klux Klan, and then amazed to hear them speculate about whether the KKK were in full costume, if they marched here. 'I thought that KKK stuff only happened in the Deep South,' I say, 'in places like Alabama and Mississippi.'

'The KKK were in lots of places, usually in secret,' says John. Both of them say there was a lot of racism in Kansas in those years – and likely a chapter of the KKK, but they don't know for sure. 'The Stars and Bars might have been waved around a bit,' Dave says, and explains that the Stars and Bars is the Confederate flag.

Bearded John leaves. Dave and I have another drink, and somehow begin to talk about writers and books. Dave likes Steinbeck, especially *The Grapes of Wrath*. 'You know,' he says, 'that book was disapproved of when it first came out because it was so raw, and the language was raw too. At school – would you believe? – we read Dickens, Chaucer and Shakespeare.'

'Chaucer! Wasn't that a bit heavy – all that Old English?'

'Yes. It was.' He grins. 'But we had to do it.' He swallows some wine. 'I like Tom Clancy. He wrote great Cold War stuff. And' – now he looks a little sheepish – 'I'm a big fan of Hunter S. Thompson, especially his book about the Nixon campaign – you know? *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*.'

‘I’ve not read that one. But I like his writing. He was a great original.’ Dave is nodding. ‘He invented a new way of writing.’ I swallow some beer. ‘I always felt sympathy for him as a man, a human; I think he was tortured, disappointed, by the world – and he got it all out in the writing.’

Dave is still nodding, and then says I should see *Where the Buffalo Roam*, the movie that stars Bill Murray as Hunter S. Thompson.

It’s past midnight, but there are still plenty of people here. Someone – Jason perhaps – produces a bottle of red wine called 19 Crimes. Amid much hilarity, it’s explained to me that this is an Australian Cabernet Sauvignon and is named after the number of crimes for which convicts were transported down under. A little is poured into a glass for me to taste – and it tastes good.

I say that it is time for me to leave, but I’m presented with another glass of IPA by dark-haired Jason, who I now realise is the proprietor of this excellent bar. He has been smiling at me in an approving way from his seat on the opposite side of the bar for some time now.

When I finally manage to leave, Dave says goodbye several times and repeats, once again, that I must visit Greensburg. Jason shakes my hand, pulls a glass from a shelf and hands it to me. ‘For you. A souvenir.’

I thank him and look at it and turn it round. ‘Oh!’ I say. ‘This glass has the name of the bar on it!’

‘Well, I wasn’t gonna give you just a glass!’

Jason comes out into the car park and points in the direction I should go. ‘Stay on Main. Across the bridge. And straight on. You’ll be fine.’

Slow Road to San Francisco Discography

The Barr Brothers, *Sleeping Operator*

Antonin Dvořák, *Symphony No 9 ‘From the New World’*

The Eagles, *Their Greatest Hits 1971–1975*

Bill Evans, *The Paris Concert, edition one*

John Fogerty, *Wrote a Song for Everyone*

Charlie Haden and Pat Metheny, *Beyond the Missouri Sky*

Emmylou Harris, *Red Dirt Girl*

Keith Jarrett, Gary Peacock, Jack DeJohnette, *The Out-of-Towners*

Art Tatum, Ben Webster, Red Callender, Bill Douglass, *Tatum Group Masterpieces, Vol 8*

Neil Young, *Harvest Moon*

Travel with David Reynolds as he sets off to explore US Route 50, one of the few remaining two-lane highways running right across the United States from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Driving as slowly as safety permits, stopping frequently and often going backwards to have a second look at something glimpsed in passing,

Reynolds talks to people on the streets, in bars and cafes, motels and gas stations. They talk about everything from slavery and Indian reservations to Butch Cassidy and Marilyn Monroe, and everyone has something to say about Donald Trump – love him or hate him. Beautifully observed, with candour, insight and humour, this is a vivid and timely portrait of small-town USA.

Previous Reviews

'An enthralling story, flawlessly told ... deeply pleasurable to read' Jonathan Coe

'A remarkable portrayal of the love between father and son ... a fabulous, moving book' Will Self

'A beautiful book ... A loving, wise book' Anne Michaels

David Reynolds was one of the founding directors of Bloomsbury Publishing. His first job was on the legendary *Oz* magazine. He is the author of *Swan River* (shortlisted for the Pen/Ackerley Prize) and *Slow Road to Brownsville* published to great reviews.

Publicity contact: fiona@brownleedonald.com

Sales contact: sales@pguk.co.uk or orders@gbs.tbs-ltd.co.uk

Trade paperback • 328pp • £14.99 • Travel/Memoir
ISBN 9781916129207 • Eisbn 9781999313586