

I didn't realize that speed limit signs like the one you see pictured on this page existed anymore. Photographer Glen Holtz posted this picture a few months ago on a Facebook group called 'Nebraska through the Lens' that I've referred to in previous columns. This group started as a site for hunting pictures which it still features but has extended to any scenic pictures across the state. If you've ever driven Interstate 80 from Omaha to Colorado you get the feeling that Nebraska is not scenic but once you get off the interstate you'll find it to be in fact quite picturesque. Now the speed limit sign picture itself is not the most scenic but it did conjure up memories for me.



Growing up two miles north of West Concord just off highway 56, I would pass a similar sign many times going home from town. This would be in the early to mid-1960's when the speed limit on the highway was 65 daytime and 55 at night. Coming home after spending a Friday night when the stores and banks in town were open until 9 o'clock we would have to go the night time speed limit. The sign was posted just across the highway from George Flicek's place. Going south out of West Concord had a similar sign but I don't remember the exact location. It might have been close to the Fred Stone place which is now where Ellingson Companies is located.

I remember in particular seeing the sign across from Fliceks one Sunday afternoon. It was seared into my memory after I was in shock after making one of the wildest U-turns I've ever been in. There was an afternoon event going on at Hegre Lutheran church which is located on the Goodhue/Dodge County line on highway 56. The year was 1964 and the younger crowd in attendance like me would have much rather been elsewhere. Lowell Erickson of Skyburg was there and had just gotten his driver's license. He was 16 and I was 10. He got to drive his dad Lester's old Ford pickup. As I recall the pickup would have been a late 40's model. It was a classic already in 64 and today would be hard to find one still road worthy. Lowell asked me if I wanted to go for a ride. He just wanted to drive somewhere, anywhere for that matter. And I wanted to ride somewhere, anywhere. So we headed south on 56 towards West Concord. It was a beautiful day for a Sunday drive. But what happened next scared the bejeebers out of me.

We're driving along and suddenly right by Flicek's lumber, out of nowhere, Lowell decides to do a U-turn right in the middle of the highway at about 30 miles an hour. Now mind you there were no safety features in this Ford. There were no seatbelts, no airbags, nothing like that. It

did have leather seats or at least naugahyde that smelled so good in the summer heat. I'm just glad the latch on the passenger's side door held. We made the most perfect U-turn at a high rate of speed. I'm sure Lester had to buy new tires shortly after this as most of the rubber was left on the highway in a perfect U pattern. As we completed the turn and I realized that I did not die, I looked out the window and the first thing I saw was that very speed limit sign that said the limit was 65 daytime and 55 at night. The next thing I do is look over at Lowell and he turns to me and says and I quote 'Don't tell your old man about this!'

The memory of this was like it happened yesterday. And I never did tell my old man about it, nor did I tell my mom, siblings or anybody. I remember that for days after the exhibitionist driving stunt, I would be riding from town to home and I would spot the aforementioned 'U' formation made from rubber. My mom mentioned on one of those trips home that somebody



really squealed their tires. Being the stoic Norwegian that I am, I sat in silence. I didn't dare ask if Lester bought new tires for his pickup yet. And if anyone would have asked me if I knew anything about the letter writing on the highway, I would have done my best Sergeant Schultz impersonation. You might remember the rather large German soldier played by John Banner from Hogan's Heroes who would always say "I Know Nothing".

Well as years went on, I come to find out that Lowell came about his driving skills from his mom Myrtle. My mom always said she was a fast driver. And in Myrtle's later years, she had a Ford Mustang that helped her get from point A to point B in a hurry. At least that's what I was told. I just hope she never tried an Erickson type U-turn on highway 56 with that Ford.