





INSPIRED BY THE 1982 BEST-SELLER *BLUE HIGHWAYS*, AN ALUMNUS REMAKES THE CROSS-COUNTRY JAUNT IN IMAGES. PHOTOS BY EDGAR I. AILOR III AND EDGAR I. AILOR IV 🌟 STORY BY DALE SMITH

BLUE HIGHWAYS REVISITED

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Susie Ailor set in motion her husband's book-length, nation-trotting photographic journey in more ways than one. In late 1982, Susie, BS '70, MD '85, bought Edgar a hardback copy of *Blue Highways* as soon as it hit Columbia bookstores. The best-selling travel book by William Least Heat-Moon, BA '61, MA '62, PhD '73, BJ '78, recounts his 82-day driving trip that looped the United States. He describes and photographs the people and landscape along the nation's less-traveled roads.

"I read a few chapters one winter night," says Edgar, MD '72, "and I loved it." The long-time hobbyist photographer vowed to retrace the route someday and make a photographic version of Heat-Moon's book.

Susie knew that Heat-Moon sat just two seats away from them during basketball games at the Hearn Center. At her suggestion, Edgar approached Heat-Moon and asked him to autograph the book. The meeting launched a friendship that helped Edgar nurse his dream for decades while he and Susie practiced medicine and reared two children in Columbia.

And it was Susie, once again, who encouraged Edgar to retire early from his practice and make a second career in photography, living out his own blue-highways dream. One of the Ailor children, Edgar IV, Bus '98, became a photographer and contributed images to the book from his home base of Schenectady, N.Y. The Ailors made a total of 13 trips across the country, turning Heat-Moon's words into images.

Their book, *Blue Highways Revisited* (University of Missouri Press, 2012), published 30 years after the best-seller, includes 363 photographs. Several are reprinted here. Edgar III meticulously credits Susie for her role in the book: "Her love and support made it possible." **M**





Previous spread: New Mexico Route 146 north of Hachita

Opposite page: Monastery of the Holy Spirit, Conyers, Ga.; and Old U.S. 95 at Lewiston Hill, Ohio



This page, first row, from left: the Watts family: Marilyn, Thurmond, Virginia and Hilda, in Nameless, Tenn., in 1978, and Marilyn with son Davis in 2009.

Second row: Fisherman Tom West near Porpoise, Maine, in 1978, and near Kennebunk, Maine, in 2008; Brother Patrick Duffy at the Monastery of the Holy Spirit, Conyers, Ga., in 1978, and Father Patrick Duffy at the Anton Chico Mission, San Jose Parish, N.M., in 2009.



Third row: Margaret and Laurie Chelander in Frenchman, Nev., in 1978, and Laurie, center, between daughters, Camille, left, and Callie who stands with her son, Sean, in 2009.

Fourth row, right: Photographer Edgar I. Ailor III and wife Susie pose with son and fellow photographer Edgar I. Ailor IV.

Author and photographer William Least-Heat Moon took the black-and-white images above during the trip that led to the publishing of *Blue Highways*. He drove a 1975 Ford Econoline van, which is housed at MU's Museum Support Center near campus.



THIS PAGE: BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOS BY WILLIAM LEAST-HEAT-MOON





See more of Edgar I. Ailor III's photos
from across America's blue highways.
mizzoumagazine.com/spring2013

↓ Lighthouse at Cape Neddick, 15 miles south of Kennebunkport, Maine.





'ON THE OLD HIGHWAY MAPS OF AMERICA, THE MAIN ROUTES WERE RED AND THE BACK ROADS BLUE. NOW EVEN THE COLORS ARE CHANGING. BUT IN THOSE BREVITIES JUST BEFORE DAWN AND A LITTLE AFTER DUSK — TIMES NEITHER DAY NOR NIGHT — THE OLD ROADS RETURN TO THE SKY SOME OF ITS COLOR. THEN, IN TRUTH, THEY CARRY A MYSTERIOUS CAST OF BLUE, AND IT'S THAT TIME WHEN THE PULL OF THE BLUE HIGHWAY IS STRONGEST, WHEN THE OPEN ROAD IS A BECKONING, A STRANGENESS, A PLACE WHERE A MAN CAN LOSE HIMSELF.'

— FROM THE INTRODUCTION TO BLUE HIGHWAYS



← Counter-clockwise from top right: predawn image of 350-year-old Burr Oak in Missouri River bottoms near McBaine, Mo.; downtown Annapolis, Md.; Burnham School, five miles east of Kremlin, Mont.; and Hotel Nevada, Ely, Nev.