

Lunch at Marge's



“The Corner Grill,” Easter, NC - Google Street View Screen Capture January 2021. This may or may not have been Marge's in the 1980's. It looks familiar but the building has been remodeled.

While working at the Puzzle Palace from 1981 to 1998, a group of friends and co-workers began making an annual pilgrimage to Fayetteville, North Carolina for six straight rounds of golf. We would drive down to Fayetteville on a Friday morning, play 18 holes of golf in the afternoon, 36 holes on Saturday and Sunday, then another 18 Monday morning before driving back to Maryland. We usually did this in April or May but one year, in the late 80's I think, we booked the event for July, probably because of conflicts in the players' schedules. It was a package deal that included three nights at an EconoLodge, three breakfasts at a Shoney's across the street and six rounds of golf at local courses.

Our waitress at Shoney's one morning was a young, sweet-but-innocent girl who struck me as a new employee who had perhaps grown up on a farm. She asked us where we were from and when we told here we were from Maryland, she was curious as to why we came to Fayetteville. We explained that we were golfers and came to play golf. Not long afterward, we observed several rough looking dudes climbing off their Harley Davidson motorcycles and entering the restaurant. They were adorned with the usual beards, tattoos and leathers with patches. They settled into a couple of booths next to ours. When the waitress came to take their orders, she asked, "Are Y'all golfers too?" I nearly spit my coffee out! When I went back to the breakfast buffet, I was standing beside one of the bikers when he said, "Man, I've been called lots of things but nobody ever called me a golfer."

This was a Sunday morning and it was to become one of the hottest days of the summer. We loaded up with water, Gatorade and styrofoam coolers full of ice. Our Sunday morning round was at Baywood, a relatively new course at the time. It was already oppressively hot and humid at 8:00am. I remember standing there on the first tee, watching steam rise off of the fairway. By the time we finished the 18 holes, we were all very hungry and very thirsty, despite having downed copious amounts of water and Gatorade. There were no lunch facilities at the course, so we would have to find a place to eat and then return for the afternoon's round. We inquired at the Pro Shop for directions and were told that the closest place was Arby's. We headed out, trying to follow the directions given to us but clearly got lost. We pulled over at a gas station and there was a small eatery with a sign over the door that read "Marge's". With little time to kill before needing to be back at the course on time, we filed into Marge's and sat on round stools along a lunch counter. Behind the counter was Marge, a very large Marge, flipping hamburgers on a hot grill. The outside temperature had to be in the 90's and there was no airconditioning in the place. We overheard some locals talking about how hot it was and how they had not had rain in weeks. The menu was limited and most of us ordered cheeseburgers. As we watched Marge flip our burgers, we also saw sweat dripping off her forehead and sizzling on the surface of the grill. While we watched,

another customer commented on the brutal heat and Marge responded saying, "Land sakes, child! It's so hot I gotta wring my socks out when I get home."

Before our burgers were done, three ladies came in wearing their Sunday-go-to-meeting dresses and hats. There was a menu on the wall behind the counter listing a lunch special which included okra. One of the ladies asked, "How do ya fix that oakree, Marge?" "Jess liik ya fix it at home, honey."

The burgers were unusually good and we jested about the secret ingredient being Marge's sweat.

We thought the morning heat and humidity was bad but were not really prepared for how bad it actually became in the afternoon. After golf, we bee-lined to the motel, showered, put on dry clothes and headed to dinner, all the while downing more water. I drank several glasses of water with dinner. After dinner, we moved to a nearby bar/lounge where we consumed quite a few beers. It was nearly midnight before I achieved the first piss of the day.

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