

Seen by the side of I35 in Iowa: "Exit 133 Ellsworth Radcliffe"Â Sounds like a title and author to me.Â What say?Â A new nom de plume?

Seen by side of US-50, about 9 miles west of Sadalia, Missouri.Â A roadside stop, typical size, but with a large electronic sign above, almost as large as the store-front itself.Â On the sign, in sequence, was displayed: "3 Tacos \$2.09" "Tax Returns \$34.95" "4 Clean Bathrooms".Â My question; is the count on that last item automatically updated as conditions change?

I am now safely ensconced in St. Louis, MO, right next door to the convention center.Â As in I look out my windows, ample as they are, and that it all I can see.Â I just had dinner at Copia, a very over priced joint over on Washington St., a couple of blocks away.Â Surf & Turf with a wee little fillet and some lobster tail, a Caesar salad and a couple of Uncle Val's (!) Martinis came to \$75 + tip.Â Oh well, balanced against my McDonald's fish sandwich (last night) and the gas station sandwich (lunch today), my per diem can handle the heavy lifting.

The hotel is an odd bit.Â A Ramada Plaza Inn, it has some accoutrement, and completely lacks others.Â Large room, with large bathroom, but only one trash bin.Â A CRT television (when was the last time you saw one of those?) which is weird, but at least everything looks normal, unlike the stretched and squashed visages on most hotel room HDTV sets.Â Ice bucket, but no liner.Â No glasses at all, paper cups for everything.

No time for sight seeing in Wichita, KS or Jefferson City, MO, but that's probably no great loss, right?Â Hotel is rife with scholastic volleyball players — this being the site of the annual President's Day Invitational Tournament, or something like that.Â Hundreds of kids, all unbearably wholesome.Â What could go wrong?