



# THE TAIL OF THE DRAGON

By Bill Henrie

Following a weeklong, summer high-adventure activity in the Smoky Mountains of North Carolina with the young men of our ward, we contemplated two routes to get home: around the mountain to the east or through the mountain to the north. Those most familiar with the alternatives gladly drive an additional hour around the mountain to avoid a treacherous passage through an 11-mile, two-lane stretch of road with 318 curves, called

the Tail of the Dragon. Eager for the adventure and ready to return home as expeditiously as possible, some of us elected the road least traveled.

My family had traveled this shortcut through the mountains several times before. Motorcyclists and sightseers seeking to conquer the Tail of the Dragon travel the road most often, but commuters looking to save time also use it. At the halfway point, and at the first complaint of nausea



*Our drive would have been much different if we had followed the warning signs.*



**SPIRITUAL WARNING SIGNALS**

“There seems to be no end to the Savior’s desire to lead us to safety, and there is constancy in the way He shows us the path. He calls by more than one means so that it will reach those willing to accept it. Those means always include sending the message by the mouths of His prophets. . . . Those authorized servants are always charged with warning the people, telling them the way to safety.”

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “Safety in Counsel,” *Ensign*, June 2008, 5.

from one of the young men, we rolled the windows down and slowed down to below 30 miles per hour.

Nine miles in, we stopped at the scenic lookout to ease the motion sickness and to reassure the young men that the meandering roller coaster ride had an end in sight. Before grudgingly getting back into the caravan, we reflected on the unusually high number of off-road motorcycles (we appeared to be the only vehicle on the road with a specific destination) and the sighting of an ambulance at the entrance to the 11-mile stretch. One of the young men also observed the policeman positioned on a road we had so carefully traversed at extremely slow speeds.

When we approached the 10-mile mark, we noticed a large orange sign that read, “Road closed 1 mile ahead,” followed by a sign a half-mile later indicating “Road closed .5 miles ahead,” and then big orange barricades separating through-traffic from a bridge reconstruction site.

We stopped and stared in disbelief at the barricade. I contemplated our unavoidable return through the stomach-turning 11-mile stretch and sighed aloud, “The road is really closed?”

Then came the words from one of the youth leaders we will not soon forget, the words we would dwell on throughout our return trip, the words we would contemplate and apply in later priesthood lessons and Mutual activities: “You didn’t see that big orange sign back there that read, ‘Road closed 14 miles ahead?’”

On that hot summer day, on the meandering road with 318 curves needlessly traveled twice, we were reminded that it takes a lot longer to get home when we ignore carefully placed warning signs. **NE**