

# An Illinois Route 66 Icon Is Gone: The Windy City Road Warrior

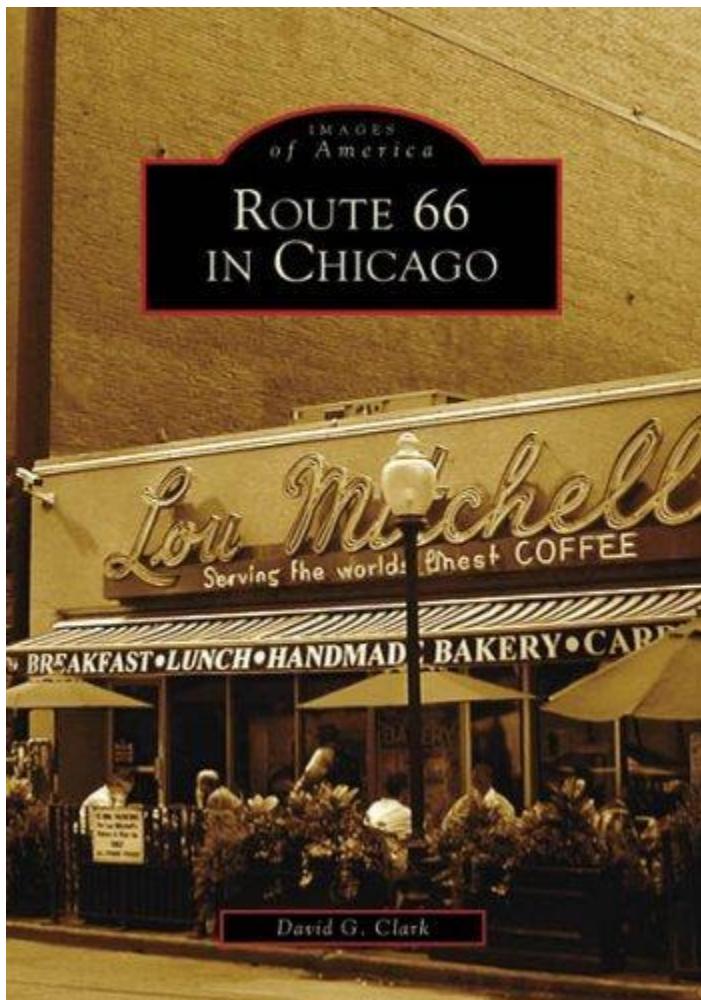
by Cheryl Eichar-Jett

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Illinois has lost a true giant of Route 66 -- the Windy City Road Warrior, David Clark. Author, historian, tour guide, meticulous researcher, and presenter, he knew his subject, loved to share it, and was known to Route 66 fans around the world. A downtown Chicago resident, David lived in a condo in a former garment factory on Adams Street, across the street from the iconic “Begin Historic Route 66” sign.

“Dave,” as his friends knew him, passed away on Tuesday, January 4, at the age of 64. On Thursday evening, January 6, many of his friends and fans were online, ready to enjoy one of Dave's monthly Route 66 programs, presented virtually for many months during Covid. But for those attempting to enter the program, all anyone could access was the message, “waiting for host to begin the meeting.” It was an ominous start to what was anticipated to be an enjoyable evening. Later that night, the news began to spread – Dave had died on Tuesday, after suffering from health problems in recent years. By the next day, his friends, colleagues, readers, and fans were posting tributes and reminiscing about his wit and sense of humor, his immense knowledge of and passion for Route 66 and for Chicago itself, and, for those who knew it, the story of his own journey to – and on – the Mother Road.



Dave graduated from high school in 1975 in his hometown of Lowell, Indiana. At Indiana University, he studied journalism, and he later earned a degree in Business/E-Business from the University of Phoenix. Attracted to the big city, Dave moved to Chicago in 1980.

Before long, he was working as a parking garage manager on Adams Street – westbound Route 66 – and soon met his future wife Carol Krohn, who worked in the bank in that same building. Dave and Carol soon married, and lived in a series of rental apartments before beginning a search for their own home. On his website, Dave said, “In December 1998, we moved into our current home, a unit in a loft conversion condominium building located on Adams Street in the West Loop Community area of Chicago, in a neighborhood known as Greek Town. We noted with interest that a sign outside the building indicated that Adams was Historic US 66.”

Realizing that they were now living on the famed Mother Road, the Route 66 bug bit them both, and they read, studied, and explored Chicago Route 66, and then the Route beyond Chicago. Dave put it this way on his website, “When we fell on hard times in the early 1990s and could not afford to travel for vacation, we decided to start exploring Chicago as if we were tourists. What better way to save money on vacation than spending time in your hometown, acting like a visitor? Thanks to our love of the Chicago Historical Society, the Chicago Architecture Foundation, and the Art Institute, we became well-versed in area history.” Dave became an expert, and Carol satisfied her collecting urge with Mother Road souvenirs and art. By 2003, they had driven the length of Route 66.

Dave brushed up his writing skills and went to work. He started with self-publishing his first book, *Exploring Route 66 in Chicagoland*, in 2006. The following year, Arcadia Publishing released Dave's excellent book *Route 66 in Chicago*. Becoming an accomplished magazine writer, dozens of his detailed and entertaining stories of Route 66 and Chicago history were published in the *Federation News* magazine of the National Historic Route 66 Federation, *Route 66 Magazine*, and other publications.





About the same time, Dave began giving walking tours on Chicago Route 66, which attracted a big following. Route 66 fans in the US, as well as international travelers, declared his tours of downtown Chicago the best they'd experienced. He also gave many programs over the years at libraries, historical and genealogical societies, and events. As the founder of the Route 66 Miles of Possibility annual conference event in Illinois, I am proud to say that Dave gave excellent programs at several of our events in recent years. And in what became a tradition at each Miles of Possibility was a Sunday Route 66 tour, in partnership with Chicago geographer Sherry Meyer's InSites To Go.

But in 2015, Dave's beloved wife, Carol, died at age 56 due to cardiac arrest after suffering other serious health problems. Dave had written on his website that at the time they met, "Ours was a Route 66 romance, even though we did not know it at the time!" They had been constant companions, married 33 years.

In 2019, the David G. Clark Mill Library was dedicated in his honor at The Mill Museum in Lincoln, Illinois. Also that same year, Dave began writing a memoir entitled *Zeno's Motel & Paradox on Route 66: The Memoir of an Author's Journey to the Intersection of Route 66 and Recovery*. In it, Dave wrote eloquently of his journey to and on 66, demonstrated his vast knowledge of Chicago and Route 66 history, and spoke openly about his and his late wife's battle with alcoholism. Portions of the memoir were serialized in the Federation News, and the book will be published posthumously, according to his family.

For the Route 66 community, and for those that were fortunate to call him friend or colleague, he will be sorely missed.

*Cheryl Eichar-Jett is the author of numerous books and articles about Route 66. Find her at [www.route66chick.com](http://www.route66chick.com) and [www.cheryleicharjett.com](http://www.cheryleicharjett.com).*

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