

<http://venturearete.org/ResearchProjects/ProfessorGurr/Documents/ZMMFactual#PirsigPilgrim>

## **Hello & Letter Of Greeting to the MOQ Audience with an **Explanation of the Origin of the Term "Pirsig Pilgrim."****

Greetings to MOQ Enthusiasts!!

I would address you as "Pirsig Pilgrims," but that is an "advanced degree" that has to be earned in a special school. Let me explain. Mr. Pirsig, in a June 2001 letter, discussing how he no longer desired to travel the West & the ZMM Route, added the following comment: "I have heard from Bozeman that there has been a steady trickle of what they call Pirsig Pilgrims who come through every summer following that route."

The term "Pirsig Pilgrim" raised my interest. Google always found things I needed to know, but this time no leads on the term "Pirsig Pilgrim." So, when I got to Bozeman on my research trip, I started asking if people had heard of it. The four Montana State University English Professors I interviewed knew much history re Mr. Pirsig, but were completely unaware of the term "Pirsig Pilgrims." In fact, they had no awareness of hardly any visitors to their campus, inquiring about Mr. Pirsig or his book.

Of course, while I was in Bozeman, I also interviewed Gennie DeWeese. Very early in the interview, she said that I reminded her of those one or two persons per year, who call her up, and ask to come see her: **I asked her if she had invented the term "Pirsig Pilgrim." I had to practically pry it out of her. Finally, she modestly and very quietly and a wisp of a smile, admitted, "Yes ..... I'm the one."**

ZMM Travelers who get to Bozeman, of course, want to see Mrs. DeWeese's famous home and share discussions of Pirsig & ZMM. Her phone number is in the Bozeman phone directory and

she clearly enjoys sharing her home and what she knows .... even with complete strangers!!! Mrs. DeWeese has apparently done this for many years! Mrs. DeWeese is now quite elderly, and typically one of her two grown daughters will participate in the fun of the discussions. She says that without exception they **(these "Zen visitors")** are a good bunch of people! So, "y'all" pat yourself on the back, you are among good company!!

Thus, it is ... the Advanced Degree "Pirsig Pilgrim" ... comes from Mrs. DeWeese herself, and your next educational challenge is to travel the entire ZMM Route yourself. That's when you earn the right to call yourself a "Pirsig Pilgrim"!

### **Talk Summary:**

In the Summer of 2002, I followed the route of travel described in the book *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (ZMM) by Robert Pirsig (1975). I did my best to research and photograph all the places ZMM Narrator reports seeing as he traveled from Minneapolis to San Francisco. My rather modest effort just to photograph the "Sights and Scenes" of ZMM gradually morphed into a "field check-up" of the factual accuracy of the ZMM Narrative. In actual fact, the closer I looked for the physical evidence, the more and more the "ZMM Travel Narrative" stood to factual test! Mr. Pirsig's book, detail after detail, to use his own words, held to *Good old reality*. I was amazed!! It is a great tribute to Mr. Pirsig as an author that this much detail is weaved into the ZMM Travel Narrative!

I did not expect to find this! Nor did many ZMM critics! They and I doubted the "total reality" of the ZMM scenery and places. Moreover, my own initial doubt resulted in my failure to find many ZMM locations. If I had taken Pirsig's words as literal fact from the "get-go," I would have found many ZMM locations **much, much, faster!!**

In this MOQ talk, I: 1) say "Hello" to the MOQ Conference audience, 2) give an introduction to myself, and then 3) Show some of the more outstanding examples of Mr. Pirsig's factual precision. As you will see, this webpage thus will be a good introduction to the remainder of my 800 ZMM Route Photos, displayed elsewhere on this site.

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