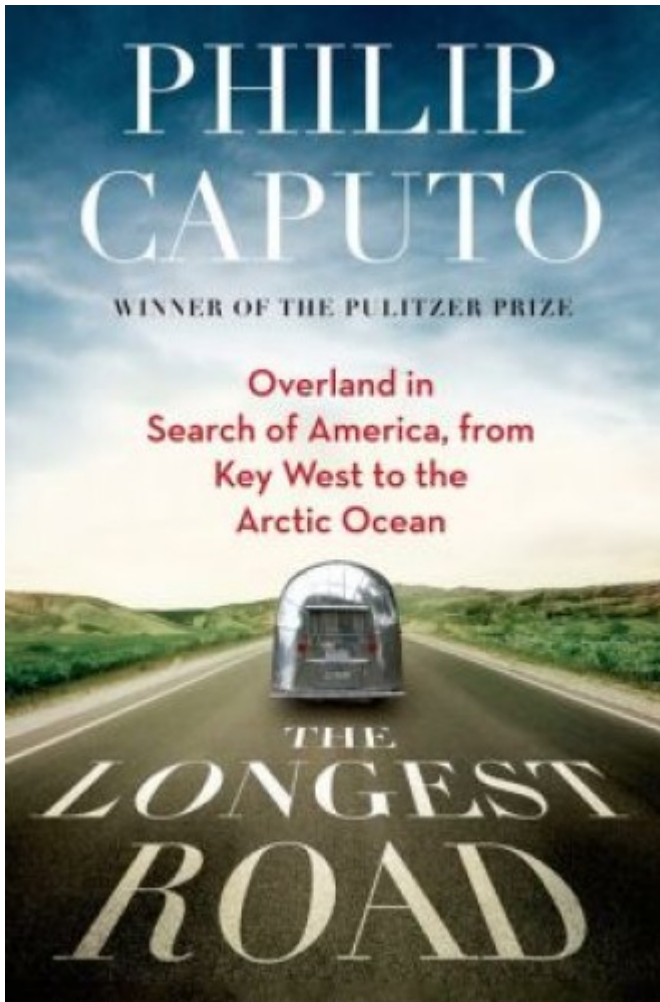


The Longest Road, by Philip Caputo

Books in the [October 30, 2013](#) issue

In Review



The Longest Road

By Philip Caputo
Henry Holt and Company,

After his elderly father died and he himself was approaching 70, Caputo took a road trip, cutting diagonally across America and a corner of Canada. Along the way, from Key West to Alaska, he asked people what keeps America together despite its

diversity and political polarization. What makes the *pluribus unum*? The responses were as different as the people he encountered: the opportunity to try new things, the chance for immigrants to start a new life, the space for expansion and a sense of hope. What makes you think Americans are holding together? one person asked. Caputo makes the counterintuitive observation that conflict keeps us together—the fundamental conflict between two different visions of America: the Jeffersonian, which promotes individual freedom, and the Hamiltonian, which advocates strong, centralized government. “Too much Jefferson leads to anarchy; too much Hamilton to tyranny.”