

2006 Trip West Blog Text

We posted enroute comments on our B&B blog. I've extracted them and placed them in order in this document in case the blog disappears.

Saturday, March 25, 2006

Trip To Go

Howdy. My name is Earl. I have checked my travel list, rechecked it, crossed off from my list what I have packed, and where is my karma!!! Must pack for winter, spring, and maybe warm days in the desert. We leave by 7AM Monday and head to Kansas, first to plains, then oil wells, and then New Mexico - volcanos!!! Would sure try someday to count all the old volcanos in New Mexico. Capulin Volcano is my favorite - climb to the top of it, walk the rim, and look for miles in the distance for the other volcanos. It's fascinating! Sandra.

Monday, March 27, 2006

First Day Report

Reporting on our first day on the road:

Miles: 497; hours: 10:06.

Ending point: Comfort Inn, Guymon, OK.

Highlights:

1. Dinner at Cattleman Cafe, Liberal, KS. Best chicken fried steak ever!
2. Hooker, OK - ultimate in Chamber of Commerce promotions - See the picture of their sign.
3. Prairies of Kansas - lots of rolling hills, cattle, wheat fields and oil wells (pumping away madly).

Lowlights:

1. Mullinville KS - Bill wouldn't stop for the whirligigs along the highway (as seen on CH-19 KCPT "Rare Visions and Roadside Revelations") - something about a semi on his tail and a 30 mph headwind.
2. Plains KS - Bill wouldn't stop to let Sandra make a snowball left over from the 10" blizzard a few days ago.
3. Meade KS - Sandra couldn't find the sign she remembered from last year: "The Dalton Boys shouldn't have gone to Coffeyville."

Comments:

1. Great use by several towns of pretty small tourism hooks. Already mentioned Hooker OK - oh, and their baseball team is called the "Horny Toads.". Meade KS has signs all over promoting their Dalton Hideout museum. One sign for Greenburg KS (home of world's largest hand-dug well) said "You'll get a BIG-WELLcome here."
2. First Sightings - Bill got the first antelope, first cholla cactus, 1st oil well and 1st dead coyote. Sandra got 1st prairie dog hole. No buffalo or dead armadillos.

3. Unique sighting - a herd of black angus galumphing across the highway, then turning around and galumphing back. Think they were escaped convicts.

Tomorrow: Tucumcari NM dinosaur museum, Roswell Art Museum (just to tell them that we're really there for the UFO museum), possibly Lincoln (Billy the Kid country), ending in Ruidoso, with perhaps a visit to the Apache casino.

Tune in tomorrow, same time, same station.

Tuesday, March 28, 2006

Tuesday Morning Report

It's still dark out here at 6:30 AM, so no rush to leave.

Motel review - Comfort Inn Guymon:

Room: 3rd floor - nice, spacious, clean, good wi-fi connection, small fridge, microwave. Toilet didn't shut off until jiggled. Water pressure not that good. Had a folding chair at the desk/table (tacky, tacky).

Continental breakfast: We'd seen what Dale Yelton serves at the Warrensburg Station Comfort Inn and would have been happy with about half of it. Didn't get it - nothing hot whatsoever, just some wrapped rolls, bagels or croissants, 2 flavors of cereal, one banana (yesterday's) and badly watered down apple & orange juice. Not happy.

We're off to see some dinosaurs, aliens, outlaws and horse statues.

Tuesday Evening Report

From the Holiday Inn Express, Ruidoso NM

Miles: 440

Time: 11:36 on road (& sight-seeing)

Highlights:

1. Tucumcari - Mesalands Dinosaur Museum is a great little museum with a friendly staff. Sandra met a Triceratops there. Also some neat murals, and of course old Route 66 kitsch.
2. Roswell - The UFO Museum, of course, followed by a few of the rooms at their fancy art museum.
3. Green or Red - great SW Mexican food (for lunch & supper)

Lowlights:

1. Breakfast at Comfort Inn
2. Rain - especially at night
3. ?

Comments:

1. High Plains scenery - Sandra especially liked the windmill farm and the mesas, all while listening to Coyote Waits by Tony Hillerman.

2. First sightings: Bill got the tumbleweed, Sandra had the dustdevil.
3. Apache casino (Inn of the Mountain Gods) is spectacular. Sandra lost \$5, but Bill won \$3 of it back.

Tomorrow: White Sands, visit Uncle Murray in Las Cruces (as well as a good bookstore), and on to Tombstone.

Wednesday, March 29, 2006

Wednesday morning report

Breakfast here doesn't start until 6:30, which is 7:30 to us. We'll be on the road by 7:30 their time, on to White Sands.

Motel report, Holiday Inn Express, Ruidoso:

Room: 3rd floor, clean, great shower, good towels, good mattress, TV, microwave, fridge, wi-fi. 4 HBOs on the TV. This is the competition for B&Bs.

Continental breakfast: Haven't eaten it yet, but it will be the standard HIE breakfast with no hot food.

While waiting for breakfast, I may work on some pictures for the main travel website.

Gas prices yesterday: \$2.49 almost everywhere, low was \$2.45. First day we saw from the mid \$2.30s to \$2.50.

Today we're off to see some white sand, Uncle Murray, and Boot Hill.

Wednesday Evening Report



Wednesday evening, from Holiday Inn Express, Tombstone AZ

Miles: 383

Time on road (including visits): 10:35

Gas prices paid: \$2.39 in Las Cruces to \$2.49 in Benson. A lot of places were higher.

Highlights:

1. Las Cruces - Visiting Uncle Murray, a great Mexican restaurant, and visiting a super used bookstore (Bill bought 16 titles for \$27).
2. White Sands - Lots of photo ops.
3. Tombstone - Dinner at Big Nose Kate's saloon.

Lowlights:

1. Heavy crosswinds.
- 2 & 3. Weren't any.

Comments:

1. Got to Tombstone late, but the town seems to really be doing a good job with their "old west" tourism hook. For a tourist trap, it's not all that tacky. Some of the folks in the old time saloons we visited looked like they dressed that way all the time.
2. That picture taking at White Sands got kind of competitive. Sandra kept getting into Bill's picture (was that competition or vanity?).
3. Would have liked to stop in a neat rest area in AZ with granite boulders all around, but time was a bit tight.
4. First Sightings: White sands by Bill.

Tomorrow: Saguaro cacti, an ancient ruin, and Phoenix.

Thursday, March 30, 2006

Thursday Morning Report

Motel report, Holiday Inn Express, Tombstone:

Room: Very nice, spacious room, essentially clean but vacuum needs better edge work. Finally, a toilet that didn't keep running. Bathroom standard HIE, good towels, etc, plus *great* water pressure. I could say the place was the pits, but it'd be more correct to say they *have* pits - of the horseshoe variety.

Breakfast: standard HIE, but the lady handling it had lived here 40 years and loves the town. Had a restaurant at one time and retired.

Today we'll spend a bit more time in Tombstone, taking pictures of downtown, visiting Boot Hill and maybe the museum. Then it's off to Saguaro, Casa Grande Ruins, and finally Phoenix.

Thursday Evening Report

Thursday Evening, Holiday Inn Express, Tempe AZ

Miles: 210 (plus local travel in Tombstone & Tempe)

Time on Road: 7:40

Gas prices paid: \$2.41 in Tempe. Saw much higher prices

Highlights:

1. Tombstone - Neat buildings, friendly people, an interesting museum. Even the dogs were photogenic.
2. Tempe - Not the town or anything, but meeting Jeremy Robinson & his business partner John Hinton for dinner & a beer.
3. Tucson area - Saguaro National Park, east unit. Lots of good pictures (we'll see which of us has the better shots); also a ranger told us a scenic route that avoided backtracking and missed most of Tucson).

Lowlights:

1. Traffic
2. Traffic

3. Yep, traffic

Comments:

1. Found a good Mexican restaurant (Lupe's) at a crossroads of AZ-77 & AZ-79 along that scenic route. Folks at next table heard us telling waitress where we were from, and they stayed & just talked & talked with us. Retired from back East, & pretty well off judging from the rocks on her fingers.
2. Casa Grande Ruins Nat'l site. Very interesting remains of a Hohokam site. We stopped right across the street at Wally's for needed supplies.
3. We also stopped at the Gila River Reservation's cultural center & gift shop. Learned a bit from the displays, but the gift shop had a lot of nice items. Place itself a but run down, and they didn't have any info to speak of on other tribal attractions (like casinos).

Pictures - no time this evening.

Tomorrow: Gallivant around the local area & plan for what Sandra is going to do while I'm in a meeting.

Friday, March 31, 2006

Friday Morning Report

So far, we're happy with the HIE Tempe. Didn't need to use A/C last night. We are concerned about the tornado reported SE of Warrensburg, wondering if our place was safe.

Today we see what we can do this AM & set up for Sandra to do this PM while I'm at the meeting. Report on today's activities tonight.

Saturday, April 01, 2006

Saturday Morning Report

Yesterday was spent sightseeing in the morning, and Sandra had adventures while I was at a meeting.

Highlights:

1. Tour of South Mountain. Great views from a volcanic massif. Talked to a ranger and learned a lot about the area from her. She was there to keep people from selling stuff to tourists. It was Cesar Chavez day & schools were out.
2. Sandra had a 35% profit at the Gila River Community casino
3. Seeing a lot of old acquaintances at the vendor preview at the conference.
4. Good food

Lowlights:

1. Meeting. I hate meetings
2. Call from our house & horsewatcher. With the tornado reported nearby, any call was a worry. As it turns out, no real damage.

Small World Department:

1. Thursday night, our waiter attended CMSU in Warrensburg for a year; he's from Drexel MO south of KC.

2. Friday noon, we ate a quick bufffet at the casino mentioned above, run by the Pima & Maricopa Indians. I had to run early to get to my meeting and left Sandra to pay the bill (& play). She got into a conversation with the waitress, who turned out to be Navajo from the Canyon de Chelly area. Sandra mentioned a stop at a trading post last year, in Lukachukai. The waitress did a double-take and said "My parents own that trading post."

Comments:

1. The B&B Association meeting was better focused than the one in Providence.

Today: Meet Lois (Su Casa B&B, KC) and go to the Heard Museum here. Then, it's off to the conference for the afternoon session. This evening, will meet other B&B folks for another SW/Mexican dinner.

Saturday Evening Report

Still in Tempe. This AM, we picked up Lois Hoover (Su Casa B&B, Kansas City) and went to the Heard Museum. It wasn't open yet, so we drove up to North Mountain Park. It wasn't open, either, so after a few pictures we headed back toward the Heard. Ooops - a *Thrift Store*. I pulled in without orders.

The Heard was definitely a highlight. It concentrates on the tribes of Arizona, with cultural items and art.

Then it was look for lunch. Drove for an hour and ended up in same place we'd eaten Thursday night. That wasn't all - went there with the CAIK group this evening. Good thing we like the food there!

It was back to the conference for workshops. Sandra says she learned how to make a cucumber sandwich (*she came to a conference for that?*) - she may even share the recipe. She says this conference is hard work. I went to internet sessions.

Tomorrow: More sessions.

Tuesday, April 04, 2006

Tuesday Morning Departing

It's been a few days - conference has been intense and after dinner with various friends we've gotten in late.

Last night we met some old friends from our days in Rome, New York. Steve and Jackie Miller retired here where she has old family property; they took us to a little town called Cave Creek where we ate at a "rustic" BBQ place. OK, but it's not KC BBQ!

Today it's back on the road. We're going to Sedona and Flagstaff. Ought to get lots of pictures and have some stories to tell.

Tuesday Night in Flagstaff

Got thru Phoenix pretty well during rush hour, thanks to the HOV lane (glad I learned what those are).

The neat forest road we were told about was closed because of weather worries (like maybe snow), so we had to double back 22 miles. Total miles: 227, total time on road & sightseeing, 9 hours.

Dateline Montezuma Castle NM - Sinagua ruins well preserved and think we got some good pictures.

Dateline Sedona - Can you say Branson? Without the music and with somewhat less tacky tourist traps, but with the traffic? Yep, we saw a lot of red rocks (and took a lot of pictures, naturally). Sandra thought it'd be arty like Taos, but it had nothing like the collection of galleries within easy walking distance. Oh, well. Red rocks are nice.

Dateline Flagstaff - The Mexican food here was completely different from what we had elsewhere; seems more California than NM or southern AZ.. Not sure we like the difference. Motel room is the smallest of the trip, and the table sets way too high for comfortable typing. Gas is either \$2.55 or \$2.69 per gallon - guess which we paid. First place we've turned on the heat.

Wednesday, April 05, 2006

Wednesday AM report

Flagstaff - It's 41 degrees and rainy. There go our plans for the day. We'd planned to go to Sunset Crater, Meteor Crater, Painted Desert, Gallup and Grants before getting to Albuquerque, and that was going to be a long day. Will have to see what we can do under the current circumstances. There's some things we want to see in Albuquerque that we didn't have on the list, but can add now.

This evening we meet Madge Harrah, who wrote the Blind Boone book, for dinner in Albuquerque. At least 355 miles, and lose an hour, anyway.

Kind of looking forward to getting home. This is our 10th day on the road.

Thursday, April 06, 2006

Thursday PM report

Well, you didn't get anything last night or this AM because the HI Express server went down. Just one of many problems on the day.

Started out on Wed AM from Flagstaff in a cold, driving rain, temp about 39 degrees. Naturally, we skipped a few sites we had planned - Sunset Crater, Meteor Crater - to outrun the rain. When we stopped at Painted Desert, the wind just about blew us off the overlook - the park people said gusts were hitting 60. Then we stopped at a neat welcome center in New Mexico, run by Navajos - very friendly. Next stop was Gallup, where we split a Navajo Taco at the same restaurant we visited in 2002 - same meal, same table even, but not the same price. Went to the same thrift stores we visited last year, but only good stuff was a "Navajoland" T-shirt.

Got to the HI Express in Albuquerque (Balloon Park) and the reservation was screwed up. They had us in a cramped, non-smoking handicapped room. Pool was down for maintenance. Went to visit Madge

& Larry Harrah (Madge wrote the Blind Boone book) and they took us to an excellent Mexican restaurant. I'm starting to figure out how to get around Albuquerque.

Miles: 360, Time on road: 8:15

Thursday we left at 7:45 AM for Petroglyph NM. Can you say COLD. I thought you could. Temp about 40 and wind was blowing. We cut the visit short and went to the Pueblo Cultural Center. I finally have the Pueblo language assortment straight in my head. Left about 10:30 and headed for Santa Fe.

Did a lot of walking, took some pictures, had a nice lunch and froze our tails off trying to sit in the Plaza. Not many people to watch. Went to the State Art Museum and the Georgia O'Keeffe museum. Sandra likes it; I reserve judgment.

The Comfort Inn in Tucumcari has some real problems. We had stained sheets & blanket, so we had to get sheets and remake our own bed - well, we need the practice.

Miles: 264, time on road (& being tourists): 10:35

Friday, April 07, 2006

Friday AM Report

From Comfort Inn, Tucumcari NM

Motel was OK except for the sheets (& chintzy towels). Slept well, anyway.

Today: Palo Duro Canyon near Amarillo, Washita massacre site near Cheyenne OK. Tonight in Weatherford OK.

Tomorrow: Cowboy Hall of Fame in OK City, possibly the Gilcrease in Tulsa or the new Cherokee casino, then HOME.

Friday PM report

Dateline: Holiday Inn Express, Weatherford OK

High winds again today caused a slight change in plans. We went to Palo Duro Canyon, Canyon, TX as planned. It was nice and scenic, but some clouds came in and messed up the photography. Besides, when one has been to Canyon de Chelly, Bryce, Zion and Canyonlands (not to mention the big daddy), it wasn't that impressive. Since it's in Texas, they shouldn't call it a canyon, just a Texas-sized gully.

Then came the change in plans. Instead of continuing on to the Washita Battlefield, we visited the Panhandle/Plains Museum in Canyon, on the campus of West Texas A&M. Good decision! Art, history, paleontology, geology, pioneer town, oil derricks ... could have spent more than the 90 minutes we were there.

Got in to Weatherford OK at 7 PM at a NICE Holiday Inn Express. Processed today's pictures and will

send the one on the post below to some of our lodging industry friends.

Tomorrow: Leave here at 7:30, get to the Cowboy Hall of Fame in OK City when it opens at 9, then on to Tulsa, Carthage and home!

Miles: 375, time on road (& sightseeing): 9:55. Gas prices paid: \$2.55 to \$2.65.

Sunday, April 09, 2006

Home at Last

"Auntie Em! Auntie Em! There's no place like home!" Even if it was 28 degrees out this AM.

We pulled in at 8:05 PM last night after a 448 mile/12 hour final leg. Sandra had to run right out and hug Scruffy, who put on quite a show for her. Then it was time to dig thru the mail, take care of the bills & enter everything into Quicken, and make sure all the emails were answered. Oops - problem. The ISP changed the settings required for outgoing emails and I have no idea how to fix them - guess it's a call to tech support, after I get Sandra back from the dentist.

After a night in the best motel we stayed at (HI Express, Weatherford OK - said they were ranked 41st out of over 1200 nationally), we hit the Cowboy Hall of Fame in OK City shortly after it opened - great western art, plus the stuff you expect to see at a "cowboy" hall of fame. If you go there, check out the rodeo exhibit with lifesize displays and tell me if the bronc riders got a score.

We stopped at the Cherokee casino in Tulsa for a buffet lunch, then played about 30 minutes. I lost \$5 and Sandra won about \$3.50, so I think our casino stops came out even on the trip. Supper and pick up some supplies in Clinton - back in home territory.

Total miles for trip: 3,427

Total time on road (plus sightseeing): 87 hours, 37 minutes