

Day 1, Tuesday May 6, 2014

Left at 0620 (that's 6:20 AM to y'all), taking our usual route to Ottawa KS (MO-13, BB, SW200, MO-131, MO-2, KS-68) and picked up US-35 south to Emporia. Then it's US-50 & KS-150 west through the Flint Hills, then US-56 to Lyons. Lyons was our first destination stop, for a visit to the Coronado - Quivira Museum. Over the years, a number of native sites had been uncovered, with some excavated. Looked more related to the Puebloan cultures than to the Mound Builders further east. Then, enough relics had been found to pretty well prove that Coronado's expedition had spent some time in the area.

The next stop was 160 miles further, at the small town of Sublette. Not much there except a very good restaurant, the Cattleman's Cafe, which we discovered back in 2002 on our first trip SW. Sandra was disappointed - they were out of pot roast, but Bill's chicken fried steak was outstanding, as expected (we've also eaten at their location in Liberal).

Another hour or so got us to Guymon, the Holiday Inn Express. We're settled in our room and planning for tomorrow. We'll head out tomorrow for Boise City & Clayton, visit the dinosaur trackway at Clayton Lake State Park, then head on back roads across the high plains to Mosquero (murals covered in NM Magazine), Roy, then Canadian River canyon, Wagon Mound and finally Las Vegas NM.

Tid-Bits from Sandra

- ⤴ Would you believe Blinker Light Road in Cass County - has a blinker light at MO-2?
- ⤴ In Kansas - Cedar Grove Feline Conservatory - a rest home for rather large cats.
- ⤴ I-35 crosses Frog Creek at the 184 mile marker - ribbit!
- ⤴ First Santa Fe Trail marker at Marion, KS
- ⤴ Chisholm Trail is a country road about 15 miles east of McPherson - about due south of Abilene. Could it be?
- ⤴ McPherson is also the home of the Happy Trails Liquor Store, as well as the Gypsy Wagon store (crafts, I think)
- ⤴ Then there's Little River, home of the Redskins. Definitely not P.C.
- ⤴ When entering Ellinwood from east or west, we were greeted by a sheaf of wheat - in yellow-painted metal.
- ⤴ Larned is home to the Kiowa Kitchen Mexican Restaurant and the Kiowa Kampground.
- ⤴ Kinsley proudly boasts the Rowdy Ranch (a cafe). It also has characters painted in the upper windows of a 2-story downtown building.
- ⤴ Spearville's team? The Royal Lancers
- ⤴ Where would you find a storage tank (probably oil) painted pink w/ polka-dots? Just south of Sublette on US-83.
- ⤴ Who's that girl in the statues entering Liberal on US-54? Here's a hint - there's a little dog with her, called Toto.

Total miles 509.3, 11 hours from gate to hotel. Only 19 MPG with the stiff headwind all afternoon. Travel tip: If on US-54, buy gas at Tyrone, the first town after you leave Kansas.

Day 2, Wednesday May 7, 2014

The word of the day was WIND. It started out strong, turned into a gale, and kept it up much of the day. Just windy right now. We left Guymon at 7 AM on US-64, heading for Boise City & Clayton. At

Clayton, we made our first true sight-seeing stop - the dinosaur trackway at Clayton Lake State Park. Sandra wanted to go below the dam to look for a home of brown. We also, in keeping with the theme of the Santa Fe Trail, we took pictures of Rabbit Ears Peak, the first mountain sighted by travelers on the Cimarron Cutoff. Then it was back to Clayton and a long run through the prairies of the high plains on NM-402 & 102.

Our destination was the very small town of Mosquero, another "little town that could" as featured in New Mexico Magazine. What caught our eyes was the story of murals painted all thru downtown - featuring real local residents, as painted by high school students. The quick stop for a few pictures quickly proved to be a much longer one, as we ran into the owner of Town & Country Market - and he likes to talk about his town. Sandra met the folks who run the other active business downtown - very friendly as well.

We continued north on NM-39 to Roy, where Bob Wills lived & played for several years (if you don't know who Bob Wills was, you don't know Western swing!). A side trip to the Canadian River canyon (well, it is downstream of Springer, home of the Brown Hotel) proved unfruitful - scenic but difficult to access. We changed our plan and went on north to US-56, which crosses the Canadian a bit upstream from where the Cimarron flows into it. This is where the dry route of the Santa Fe Trail, plus the Military Road, crossed the river at a rocky spot with gentle slope. Accesses here were restricted as both banks are private property.

We went on to Springer, had a late lunch at Elida's Cafe (where we first ate posole in 2004). Then south to Wagon Mound and our HIE in Las Vegas. Supper was at Kocina de Raphael's, recommended years back by Sandra's Uncle Murray.

Tid-Bits by Sandra

- ^ Moo! A cow figure wearing farmer overalls and a straw hat gracing a front yard in Guymon.
- ^ The morning coke was bought at Dizzy Bill's C-Store (Bill's getting dizzy writing this, too).
- ^ No Man's Land Beef Jerky is sold from a storefront in Boise City.
- ^ Why would a realistic bronze-looking 30' Chinese dragon sinuously grace the front of an empty building in Clayton? And did it continue inside the walls?
- ^ And why is a frog squatting on the gatepost of a ranch just outside of Roy?
- ^ I must look honest. A fellow in Mosquero tried to pay me for his tank of gas.

Tomorrow, it's on to Taos via Mora & Dixon - and Sandra expects we'll do some serious searching for the Fenn treasure. 387.5 miles today (896.7 total) in 10 hours. The headwind dropped out mileage to 18.4.

Thursday, 5/8/14 - Las Vegas to Taos & around the area

If yesterday's word was wind, today's was hail. It was a tad chilly, as well, and windy to boot. We left LV at 7:30 on NM-518 for Mora, Penasco, Dixon, Pilar & Taos. We did some scouting around Embudo & Orilla Verde, but the wind and the threat of rain were a bit much - we decided to be "meek" instead. Drove out of the gorge up to the west rim, then followed the west rim road to US-64, and across the Taos High Bridge - the river itself is pretty easy to bridge, but there are few places to easily enter the

gorge, so this engineering feat was important for travel.

We were going to head for the Plaza for a while, but the aforesaid hail intervened. The hail wasn't large, but there was a lot of it. We saw 4 horses - 3 loud B&W paints and a chestnut - guess which one got shelter under the trees.

Tid-bits by Sandra

- ▲ Election season in hot upon New Mexico. Signs proliferate; we counted 22 on one corner in LV.
- ▲ The Citizens for Honest Government have adopted a stretch of NM-518.
- ▲ Seen in the Mora Valley - a bright green & yellow house trailer. It had as good a chance as any in the valley to win Yard of the Month - very little.
- ▲ Sign: 2 Gray Hares Disc Golf
- ▲ I wonder just who the customers are for Sugar Nymphs Bistro at Penasco.
- ▲ Also near Penasco - a scarecrow Sylvester - but he was green. Tweety would be scared.
- ▲ A school bus painted in rainbow colors called the Bus Stop Ice Cream & Coffee Shop at the bridge.

Lunch was a local tamale store and supper was at El Taoseno, full of locals (good posole!). Today's travel was only 178.2 miles, 1074.9 for the trip. Now we plan for tomorrow's search.

Day 4, Friday May 9 - Around Taos

Word of the day is "Tired." After a quick breakfast at McD, we headed for Pilar & the Orilla Verde Rec Area. 10 miles up the road, we came to the entrance to the Slide Trail. Got out our hiking sticks & daypacks (for water & camera) and headed up the trail looking for a blaze. After navigating the slide, we figured that a 79-year-old man with a 42 pound of treasure wouldn't have gone that way. It's up the hill & back down again, but it was good exercise.

Drove down river to Rinconado, where Embudo Creek empties into the Rio Grande. It was a nice drive, w/ no rational place to search. Back to town, finding a good lunch at Casa de Valdez. After lunch, we headed to the Plaza, visited all the shops and said "Hi" to the cats at Moby Dickens bookstore.

The we headed north to Arroyo Hondo, where we took the back roads down to the John Dunn Bridge for more photos and scenery. A lot of traffic down there. Finally, we had supper at Orlando's, which seems to be popular - we got there just in time, 10 minutes later we'd have had to wait.

Tid-bits will be later - I said the word was "tired."

Day 5, Saturday, May 10, 2014 - Around Taos

Around Taos, but not too much. I guess the word of the day is "blah" because that's how Bill felt - weak & headachy, maybe a virus. However, that did not deter us in our search for good food. Breakfast & lunch at a local institution, Michael's Kitchen (Anglo breakfast, NM lunch) and dinner at Casa de Valdez. Voted Casa de Valdez our favorite of the trip.

Did a little site-seeing. Drove out to the top end of the Slide Trail, and found a sign saying "No shooting" which seemed to be honored in the breach. Bill saw lots of evidence of shooting - 4 different center fire cases, 1 of rimfire, and a bunch of 12 GA - also evidence of "shooting up." We also visited the Craft & Art Fair at Kit Carson Park - allowed for 2 hours, but only took 15 minutes.

Rested all afternoon, did laundry, and getting ready to rest up for tomorrow's trip to Santa Fe. Total miles today date about 1200.

Tid-Bits from Sandra:

- ⤴ Frame of an old wagon which had a classy chassis: it said Studebaker
- ⤴ Rocks and more rocks, mostly big and black, in the Rio Grande & Rio Pueblo de Taos gorges.
- ⤴ Visited all the stores around the Plaza and bought nothing but a T-shirt.
- ⤴ Cats at Moby Dickens bookstore were upset - they did not approve of the new rug.
- ⤴ It appears folks dispose of hippy-painted station wagons & refrigerators over the edge.
- ⤴ Hard to find a straight road around Taos - Bill had to pull out the Garmin to find our way back to town for lunch.

Day 6, Sunday, May 11, 2014: Taos to Santa Fe

The word for today is "sore," as in Bill's left foot. That's the one that had the bone chip removed last year. All the walking around museums in Santa Fe did it, but we had to see them today because they all close on Monday. We recommend the Culture Pass, allows one to visit all the state museums and memorials once a year.

Left Taos in a leisurely fashion about 8 AM on NM-68, and arrived in Santa Fe about 10 AM - which happens to be when the museums open. After watching the pigeons on the Plaza, we went to the NM Museum of Art, then the State History Museum and the museum of the Association of American Indian Arts. We next drove to Museum Hill (right past ff's house) to visit the Folk Art & Native American Art museums.

Finally got checked in to the Holiday Inn Express, went to dinner at the Blue Corn Cafe/brewpub, and settled in for the evening. An observation: Santa Fe is not an easy place to get around - even my Garmin got lost!

Tomorrow we visit a certain celebrity, explore areas north of SF, and who knows what ~~trouble~~ adventures we'll get into. Only 93 miles today, 1303.2 for the trip. Still running about 18.5 mpg.

Day 7, Monday, May 12, 2014: Santa Fe special day

Word for the day was going to be "Fenn," but I'm not so sure it shouldn't be "snow." The snow part was indeed an adventure, but the visit with Forrest Fenn was the highlight so we'll stick with "Fenn."

For those not familiar with Mr. Fenn, he's an author, entrepreneur, collector, retired USAF fighter pilot (in 'Nam) and the creator of the treasure hunt that many (including us) have been chasing for several years. We met him in person last year (see [our blog post from last Fall](#)) and were invited to visit him when we had a chance. After an exchange of emails, we arranged to be at his house at 10 AM today.

Our problem wasn't getting there on time, it was not being too early. We went downtown to take pictures of the pigeons (hey, you never know what will do well in a contest), then drove up Old Santa Fe Trail and killed some more time taking pictures of the SF Trail bronze installation at the entrance to Museum Hill. When the time came, we showed up at the gate to announce ourselves.

We talked about his relics, his library, his artifacts from San Lazaro. He gave Sandra a sherd from a post-1300 pot found at San Lazaro from among the ones lying under a tree, a well as a couple of his books. Guess we owe him a LOT of Grapette on our next visit!

Our visit lasted about 1 1/2 hours, then we returned to the Plaza area for our now-traditional blue corn taco/enchilada at The Shed and a text "nyah, nyah" message to our friend Sandy back in Missouri - it's a tradition started when she & husband Mark ate there at our recommendation on a trip a few years ago. Then we decided to head up to see what we could see at Hyde Memorial State Park and beyond to a ski area, then take a back road back down to Tesuque. Ski areas are generally at higher elevations than cities, and weather tends to be a tad chancier at elevation - this time we hit a hard snow & sleet storm and it was sticking. About face, head back down to the motel to plan a light supper and a trip down the Turquoise Trail to Albuquerque.

Day 8, Tuesday, May 13, 2014: Santa Fe to Albuquerque

Word of the day: "Friends." We left Santa Fe a little before 8 AM & headed down the Turquoise Trail. Not the best decision, since nothing was open in Madrid. We did see lots of "kitsch" which Sandra will cover in Tid-Bits when we have a chance to add them.

It was snowing at the higher elevations, leaving some interesting scenes, which we may or may not have captured in pixels. Got to Albuquerque a bit after 9, and wonder of wonders, our room was ready! Checked in, partially unloaded, and headed for a museum run. First stop was the Maxwell Museum of Anthropology at UNM, one of our all time favorites. After a lunch at the Frontier Restaurant, we were off to the main museums - Natural History (using our Culture Pass) and the Albuquerque Museum of Art & History.

As is our tradition, at the Natural History museum we grab a quick kiss in the cave, volcano & Chixulub meteor exhibits (hey, we caught a couple of staff members smooching to the meteor a few years ago, so if they can...).

We took a short walk around the Plaza, conveniently located near the museums, then headed back to the motel for a quick email check. The evening's main event was to pick up old friend Larry Harrah, then meet Fenn Chase friends Tim & Sandy for dinner at Los Cuates on Menaul. We had a fun time (details not forthcoming), and now will get ready for another day in Albuquerque, followed by a trip to Chaco and the upcoming Fennboree. 99.8 miles today, 1459 for the trip.

Day 9, Wednesday, May 14, 2014: Albuquerque to Bernalillo

Word of the day: "Oops," as in I almost forgot to post. We left the HIE Eubank Rd and proceeded down Central Avenue (aka old US-66), getting our last glimpse at what remains of the iconic old motels from the heyday of the "Mother Road." Stopped in Old Town, did some shopping, sat on the Plaza, and had a great meal at the Church Street B&B, said to be the oldest house in Albuquerque.

We crossed the Rio Grande and headed north through Corrales and Rio Rancho to Bernalillo. One of the best secrets of Bernalillo is the Coronado State Historic Site. This is an old pueblo, one that was "visited" (read occupied) by Coronado's expedition. Its Tiwa-speaking descendants now live in nearby Santa Ana and Sandia pueblos.

One of the great things about this site is the salvaged murals from a kiva, and the reproduced ones in an elevated square kiva (up a ladder, down a ladder - tours with a guide only & no photos). There's a great view of the Rio Grande & Sandia Mountains.

Laundry done and getting ready for Chaco in the AM.

Day 10, Wednesday, May 15, 2014: Chaco!

Word of the day is, of course, "Chaco." We left Bernalillo about 7:30 AM heading for Chaco National Park. North thru Cuba, almost to Nageezi, and turn off on a road that has a reputation for being very rough - I allowed 90 minutes for the 23 mile trip. It turned out to be much improved, and it only took 30 minutes.

After a stop at the visitor center to register our presence and watch the video on relation with modern Pueblo groups. Then we headed out to view Pueblo Bonito, Chetro Ketl & Hungo Pavi ruins. The Chaco "great houses" were built in stages between the 9th & 12th centuries, and Pueblo Bonito is the largest & most central of them. The amount of work that went into hauling the timber for vigas and other supports, from 75-100 miles away, plus all the rock work, must have taken a lot of people under some central direction. Whether voluntary & religious or dictatorial we don't know.

Religion and other ceremonies were practiced in kivas, which could have belonged to one clan or totem or ????. The great kiva, as shown here, is believed to have been more for community events. They believe that many groups & languages and religious variations may have been present, something not unexpected since there are at least 7 languages in 5 groups known of today .

We also took a ranger guided tour of Una Vida, one of the earliest houses. The ranger was very knowledgeable and a good story teller. We left after about 6 hours on site in the sun, and headed for Cuba. The Frontier Meal is nice & we had a good meal at El Bruno. Tomorrow it's onto the Fennboree - no internet, no cell phone. Will try to catch up Sunday night.

Days 11-12-13, May 16-18, 2014: Fennboree

A lot of words for the weekend, not all of them nice in view of the weather. However, I think everything is wrapped up by "Fennboree." That was a camp-out for folks chasing Forrest Fenn's treasure at the Gallinas Canyon Ranch, well out in the boonies "near" Abiquiu. It's a very scenic area, and the camp had limited facilities (it did have cold water & places to cook).

We were second to arrive, so we set up our tent and then went out hunting for a small treasure hidden by our host, directions coming from a poem similar to Forrest Fenn's. I'd done some research from the info and Google Earth, and we found it rather quickly.

As more folks came in, we watched or helped them set up, without letting on we'd found the local treasure (which we'd replaced with a \$5 bill & put back where it was). A stir occurred when the author of a major blog, accompanied by an Aussie filming the chase for a magazine program back home, showed up. All of us there at the time were interviewed, and hope to see it all on u-tube before too long. Dal threw us all for a loop when he announced Fenn's latest clue - forget using a dam as the starting point.

When we set up, we'd had a bit of trouble getting the double high queen air mattress into the tent, so we let out quite a bit of air. That made our sleeping rather gamey, as the mattress moved every time we did. Sandra ended up curled up in the SUV. Morning came cold, and we had breakfast with searcher friend who goes by Tim Nobody on the blogs, and his wife. We then took a walk upriver, opposite of our trek for the necklace the previous day. Lots of pictures, looking for a future prize winner.

As the last campers arrived early Saturday afternoon, the rest of us sat around in the shade talking about clues and "solves" for the FF treasure. As we started preparing for the pot luck dinner, we discovered one of the campers was missing. That set off a major search, until we heard a faint cry for help way up the mountain. Another camper had a couple of hand held radios, incompatible with mine, so she, her son & our host (blog handle Desertphile) set up the mountain leaving me with one of hers, while one of mine was back at base camp. They soon reported the missing camper found, and brought the person down to civilization, and the lady in the rescue was awarded one of the bracelets that "Deb" made to be given at the host's discretion. The adventure was certainly worth some of Desertphile's wine, as well as other adult beverages.

We took down our tent Saturday, blew up the air mattress, and set up in a sheltered spot - which turned out to be not as sheltered as we thought as the wind accompanied the evening cold. At least the bed behaved. In the morning we finished tearing down, packed up, paid our last homage to the Shrine to Forrest Fenn & the Chase, said farewell to the host & other campers, and headed for Raton, via Tierra Amarilla, Tres Piedras, Taos & Cimarron. A good dinner at El Matador, a couple of long showers at the HIE, sorting thru about 250 emails, and updating our status, took up the rest of the evening.

Tomorrow it's the Dry Cimarron Scenic Byway, cross the Santa Fe Trail, visit the "totem poles" at Mullinville, KS, and spend the night at Pratt. We're up to 2033 miles on the trip.

Tid-Bits by Sandra:

Why are flying saucer stickers on stock-at-large signs on the way into Taos on US-64?

The Gally Store in Cimarron, NM has \$1 ice cream cones

Want to see bullet holes in a ceiling? Visit the bar in the 1880s St. James Hotel in Cimarron

Day 14, May 19, 2014: Raton to Pratt

Left Raton about 7:30 MDT and headed out on NM-72 for a trip across the rugged volcanic landscape of Johnson Mesa. The area is a vast, thick lava flow with a few cones sticking up here and there. Eventually, it drops into a valley near Folsom (where the paleoindian points were discovered, moving the timeline for settlement back a few thousand years). We departed on NM-456, which took us to the Dry Cimarron Scenic Byway. We generally followed the very dry Dry Cimarron for quite some time, stopping to take some pictures off a bridge. I had this vague Hitchcockian sense as I was surrounded by swallows (cliff or barn), roosting below the bridge. This picture shows over 60 of them!

We said "goodbye" to mountains and "hello" to prairie, including the Santa Fe Trail and returned to civilization at Boise City, OK. Then on to Guymon and US-54 for the rest of the day. Lunch at Cattleman's Cafe in Liberal, and a stop to visit folk artist Mr. Liggitt at Mullinville. He makes all kinds of art out of old metal pieces, especially old farm equipment.

We drove slowly thru Greensburg, which seems to be making progress in fully recovering from the EF-5 tornado some years ago, and on to the HIE in Pratt. Ate a light supper at El Dos de Oro (could that be a Tarot reference?). 375 miles on the day, and the strong tail wind gave us over 23 mpg on the day. Home tomorrow!

Sandra's Tid-Bits:

A Mullinville, KS, house has someone breaking into it – an appropriately-dressed dummy.

Where would you find the Dalton's Bed Post Motel? Meade, KS - of course.

Day 15, May 20, 2014: Home again.

We left Pratt about 7:30 and, except for a brief stop for lunch and a longer visit to Cottonwood Falls, KS (see "Prairie Earth" by Least Heat-Moon), drove hard getting home about 2 PM. 320 miles on the day, 2727 on the trip (that's a short one for us). Put stuff away, did laundry, now for the hard part - getting ourselves caught up. Tomorrow pick up the cats & mail, cut brush hanging over the driveway, get brush hog set up and learn to love humidity again.

Sandra's Tid-Bits:

What to do with an old grain bin? Convert it into a house – seen on KS-61 n. of Pratt

Maybe those oil well pumps are really aliens or bugs? One of them north of Pratt has antennas.