

2016 South Western Trip, New Mexico
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3811 Miles from Warrensburg, a Story of Our Trip, Including The Ever Famous Tid Bits of Observations

Tid Bit observations really didn't start until I practiced the word "Nevada" and the same for "Miami." In "Nevada" the middle A is long as in "tale" and "Miami" is pronounced "My-am-uh." At one time, Miami is where people eloped for that quickie wedding. We spent the first night there, but didn't need to elope because we've already been married for 39 years. Didn't see many Tid Bits on the trip, or maybe I slept through them. Here's a couple of early ones: a Vote for Rowdy sign near Nevada – think he was running for sheriff? Also near Nevada is Buzz's BBQ.

Then, when I thought I had identified everything, I saw something called Blue Jack along the Tenn. Road near Welch, OK. (where my first horse, Star, was raised). The Welch area is where one can see for miles along pastures, horses, black Angus. This part of Oklahoma to me is very pretty with flatness and a sky that seems to go on forever and green of green in pastures. Also, Bartlesville is a welcome town for those who have never toured Oklahoma.

Must review the TidBits that I did find in these areas of Oklahoma
One of the more interesting encounters was Ma's Loto Roc Ranch somewhere near Woolaroc ranch, but couldn't put together a link of the ranch and Woolaroc. I was more interested in the colorful oil wells on Hiway 169, and also trying to define what was a Sun Whisper.

Woolaroc was the country home of Frank Phillips (Phillips 66), where he collected Western art and native artifacts, guns, and more. The museum is worth a visit, even if his buffalo herd isn't nearby to lick your car windows. We hit some detours but found the Gilcrease Museum rather easily. You'll recognize the statue in front, since it's on most Oklahoma license plates.

Back to business, includes the Rut Dawg pawn shop near Sand Springs, Okla, where we spent Sunday night. Supper was Billy Sims BBQ – the former Sooner All-American running back seems to have quite a chain of restaurants in his name. On Monday morning heading for Oklahoma City, Bill said "don't talk to me, I need to concentrate on driving in the driving rain." The rain ended and it soon got hot and getting hotter weather when

we toured the Cowboy Hall Fame, whatever they're calling it now. It includes a really nice Western art gallery, displays about horses, Western movies, rodeo, the cavalry, Indians, cowboy life and the cattle drives along the Chisholm Trail.

Think that is all there is? How about the Indians? In the past the life was the daring Quanah Parker killing and capturing those who dared to question his abilities. In Lawton, Okla., I met a buffalo laying on the floor, games to play that were educational. And the most educational of all was the tornado built complete with wreckage inside the Museum of the Great Plains at Lawton. That home-made tornado was really scary. Also, there was a big bronze buffalo statue near the front area of the museum where games are played for learning.

Right next door is the Comanche Museum & Heritage Center, where we met the a descendant of Quanah Parker. The big display was Comanche code talkers who went ashore at Utah Beach on D-Day, but there were also displays about tribal life, the various clans, tribal history and art created by the tribal members.

Now, this next insert is going from the Comanche to UFO sightings, mystery lights in the sky and a wonderful town known as Marfa. En route, we stopped for lunch at Sweetwater Texas, where we had a surprise when we ordered BBQ beef and beans – they served it in a bowl, like we see ham and beans. Not bad, but unique. We saw a group of real cowboys saddling up for a trail ride of sorts at a local Walmart. Sure was interesting watching the cowboys, but those around the horses and horse just ignored the scene as if a trail ride around Walmart happened every day.

This insert is to introduce a real experience we had. We went to Marfa, Texas., where the unusual is often seen especially colorful ball size things flying thru the night known as the Marfa Lights. For a touristy, artsy town, the folks of Marfa are friendly. Not many restaurants seemed to be open for lunch on Wednesday, but we found a good one. We barely beat the crowd, so we got to observe the diners as they arrived. The town folks look mighty good packing their guns. (Just for rattlesnakes of course – or maybe that's why the folks are friendly). The Marfa dinner was absolutely perfect. I had a great visit, because everyone treated us as family, and the Mexican food was excellent.

In addition, there are some well-known history of Marfa and artists. In addition, the classy hotel once housed several movie stars including Rock Hudson, Elizabeth Taylor and James Dean while they were making Giant. Also, We met one of the most wonderful Spanish lady. She was in charge of tours at a local home/town museum, she also told me stories of the town and her heritage.

The town has several smaller galleries plus the Chinati Foundation, where a famous(?) artist(?) had made all kinds of things from recycled. It was too hot to take the tour, so we did walk down by the big concrete things he'd placed in various positions. Bill said "people pay money to see box culverts?"

Places to stay in Marfa include the old fashioned hotels, a B&B or two, and an odd place where one chooses among trailers, teepees, yurts, tents and hammocks. We stayed 30 miles away in Alpine. There the owner of the motel was a quiet one and actually with the lady's parents working at the motel, there wasn't much time to visit with anyone.

Great food – all places we ate at were real Mexican cooking, not Tex-Mex. The staff welcomed us to the community, we saw must unusual art of cement built boxes, and other artsy displays that puzzled us. However, the town was great, and we hope to return to continue looking for possibly UFO colorful balls traveling thru the night sky.

En route to Marfa, make sure to stop at Ft. Davis. This touristy little town has a partly restored fort that once protected the Butterfield Stage route (Tipton, MO to California). The mountains along its northwest side reminded Bill of the setting for the movie Fort Apache, but this fort never had walls. Near Ft. Davis area there are signs for Mad Dog's Cantina and Reptile store.

The saddest part of the trip was a long a hiway north of where we were. The sign at first is first is hard to read, but soon realized the fence held up pictures of horses. These horses were in memory of the horses hauled along that route to go to the slaughter house. The signs of each horse was hung on the fences. The horses were in honor of those horses that died at the slaughter house. It was a nice dedication for horses. W couldn't figure out how any place around this part of the country could have a "yard of the month" contest, unless it rewarded xeriscaping. Many of

the yards had fake yard work, pink flamingo, and consisted mostly of raked sand that the wind would relocate the next day.

Carlsbad, NM, was our next stop. It's, best-known attraction is the cave, aka Carlsbad Caverns. We'd previously enjoyed a tour for hours in the caves, so didn't stop this year. What attracted us this year to this oil-rich town was their first rate small museum. While it has the usual collection of dusty relics and some nice native artifacts, it also has a small but first-class art collection featuring the Taos School artists and regional artist Peter Hurd. A German immigrant was making a diorama of the town at the turn of the 20th Century, with operating railroads, a guano mine, and even an outhouse door that opens and closes. A real surprise was finding one of the staff members was from Stover, MO. To top things off, they recommended a place (called Kaleidoscoops) for lunch that had the best green chile cheeseburger and real home-made ice cream.

Right now, don't know where I am in travel, but no one gets confused in a town called Roswell. Carlsbad & Artesia have great art at both places, but couldn't resist the fun at Roswell. For example couldn't miss getting a new bouncy alien antenna to wear on my head. Also, someone here in Wsbg, has one, too in time for the Halloween bouncy alien antennas. Look for posters and paintings of the best-known visitor to Roswell – the UFO that crashed in 1947. We like it because of the art at the Roswell and Anderson Museums. The arts of Roswell are high class, but still the Roswell parade every year draws thousands of visitors. Was very impressed with art works there by professional artists and beginners.

Now we're headed for Las Cruces by what Bill calls the “scenic route.” We drove through Billy the Kid's town of Lincoln, stopped at Ft. Stanton (the real cause of the Lincoln County War that made Billy famous), and went on to: The little town called Carrizozzo, NM, at the junction of US-54 & US-380, where citizens on their put their donkeys on the roof of every building to attract tourism to their galleries and artsy stores . O.K., the burros aren't real, they've been painted by local artists. You don't see rooftop burros everywhere. We took lots of pictures. I guess the tourism lure worked. The Carrizozzo owners of one business have a corner treat ice cream shop/soda fountain, which happened to be closed the day we visited.

We also couldn't miss Truth or Consequences via Socorro, the Bosque del Apache Nat'l Wildlife Refuge, and the El Camino Real Heritage Center.

The last tells the story of the Spanish settlement of New Mexico. TorC (as it's known) has an unusual WalMart parking lot. They thoughtfully provide shade for the parking lot, at the same time the shades are generating solar electricity.

The next day we headed for Las Cruces, where Uncle Murray who escorted us to the local Sat. craft show in downtown Las Cruces. I looked at the arts and crafts and food, but we had to pry Bill from the Coas Book store. I tried this time to drink Mexican milk, but still don't know what it is. Uncle Murray and his friend Peggy treated us with lunch at the La Posta restaurant in Mesilla. Last time here I tried to teach the parrots to cluck like chickens, but this year other eaters at the restaurant were too busy acting prissy, so I couldn't cluck with the parrots.

The next morning as we left our hotel in Deming, we noticed something surprising at the parking lot near the street. We were near the motel, but we were on a street where there was no traffic. Too early in morning, but looked over at the vacant parking lot and saw a dinosaur standing in the lot with a smaller dinosaur. Sure looked like mama dinosaur was pushing the baby dinosaur around the lot but Bill spoiled the fun by saying the big one was a T-Rex and the smaller likely a velociraptor. Pictures are available for this one photo.

We went south to Columbus, New Mexico, site of Pancho Villa's raid across the border. Museum was closed and the staff was in no hurry to open it on time, so we walked around outside and took pictures of the 1912 armored car. New Mexico has a highway that pretty much parallels the border here, so we weren't surprised to see several Border Patrol vehicles along the way. While in the area I spotted not an UFO in the sky but a tied down tethered blimp watching the nearby border.

Out in this really empty area we stopped at the semi-ghost town of Hachita. It seems to have died a lot since it was written about in Blue Highways (by Missourian William Least Heat-Moon). The town is basically gone except for a deserted church and abandoned buildings. Did see one person trying to mow the front area where there was no grass. They do have the Hachita Rest area – two toilets in the brush, no walls.

Had a great lunch at Ramona's in Lordsburg – which sure doesn't look like the town John Ford's 'Stagecoach' was heading for. We spent the night in

Willcox, AZ, where we met another descendant of Quanah Parker running an antique/junk store. Parker supposedly had 25 wives, so he has a lot of descendants.

Weather is getting hot, so we depend on water bottles and peanuts for awhile. Oh well, dreaming of an oil well in front yard isn't as much fun as bringing our old hand-made lobster pot for display on the front porch.

From Willcox we headed north on US-191 – it used to be called US-666. No matter what it's named, Bill said it was the devil to drive with the curves, switchbacks and ups and downs. Clifton, AZ, is an old mining town with the currently largest copper mine in the country. It also has a herd of bighorn sheep that wander in and out. The mine is changing the shape of the mountains, cutting off tops and filling up areas with waste rock. Other than that, the drive was scenic if your nerves can stand it.

We spent the night at Holbrook in one of those old Route 66 motels, the Globetrotter. It was quite nice, but we didn't sleep that well. Across the road are the concrete tepees of the Wigwam Motel, each with a classic car or motor cycle in front. As I watched, more travelers on Harleys arrived.

The Navajo Nation was next. We ate at Chinle and took a drive along the south rim of Canyon de Chelly (d-Shay) to our favorite overlook at Spider Rock, which we visited on both our 30th & 35th anniversaries. Lukachukai is another favorite stop, the Totsoh Trading Post, where we are friends with the owners (ask me about the “small world” experience). A trading post is a small general store, selling bulk flour and supplies to locals. They have a side business of buying rugs and jewelry from other Navajo and reselling them.

Through a pass on a road that is paved, although the maps don't show it, to the area of Ship Rock, one of the best known sights in New Mexico. When we stopped at an overlook to take some pictures, a young Navajo couple was smooching. We tried not to bother them.

Aztec, NM, is a fun place. It's home of Aztec National Monument, a well-preserved Chacoan site with a large grand kiva reconstructed. Aztec also has a neat local museum. The first time we stopped there, in 2004, the resident cat acted as our tour guide through the reconstructed early town. Alas, the cat has passed on and also passed from memory of the museum

staff. The museum has added the the most unusual display, a hand-carved cyclorama. Push a button and the display rotates in front of you, with all kinds of scenes appropriate to the New Mexico and the Southwest.

Of course, Bill and I stayed at Albuquerque and met with a friend Larry, he's about 85 but frisky. We took him to a restaurant near Univ. of N. Mex., and he was surprised at the restaurant he had never visited, so he wanted a scotch drink when he got home. He was at Wright-Patterson AFB when material from the 1947 Roswell incident ("UFO crash") was brought in. Lots of fun teasing him, but he can't/won't say anything about what he did or didn't see.

We spent Thursday site-seeing around Albuquerque, avoiding the interstates. Most everything we want to see is in Old Town, a nice plaza with two Confederate cannons left behind by Sibley in 1862, antique, kitsch and t-shirt shops, restaurants and the local Catholic church. Also there is another bookstore, and Bill came out with two more books. We had lunch at the Church Street Cafe, a favorite. Same waiter 3 years in a row. Supper was at Abuelita's in Bernalillo. Reviews said the red was hot and the green even hotter. Bill tried them both and said "Sho' nuf!"

Off to Santa Fe first thing in the AM, doing the usual things – sitting on the plaza looking for Georgia O'Keefe's ghost or maybe some ghostly cowboys (honest, I saw them on one of our trips), but no luck. We did find that our museum visits were free because Bill is a veteran. A stop at the IAIA museum store to buy a table-top book of David Bradley paintings, lunch at The Shed (traditional "nyah, nyah" call to Sandy Irle), and it was off to Fennboree.

What's a Fennboree, you ask? It's a camping party of large group of followers of Forrest Fenn, who has hidden a chest containing gold, jewels and artifacts estimated to be worth up to 2 million dollars, somewhere in the Rocky Mountains north of Santa Fe and published the clues in a poem. Thousands of 'searchers' have combed the 4 states in play, with interest seemingly concentrated on northern New Mexico and the Yellowstone area, since 2010. There are several blogs where searchers try out their ideas and report their latest unsuccessful expedition. Folks who hunt like us are now "family" you might say, although sometimes dysfunctional. Folks get into the "Chase" thinking the poem will be easy to solve and the treasure easy to find. Wrong. Treasure hunting is difficult and seeing the Southwest is a great way to avoid hunting for awhile.

We really enjoyed the Fennboree on Friday evening and Saturday most of the day. We camped at the Silver Saddle Motel in Santa Fe – no roughing it for us. Lots of conversations, very artsy rooms. Only a continental breakfast served and we hit the road early each day. This is another of the classic Route 66 motels (bet you didn't know that at one time it went through Santa Fe). Rooms were comfortable if a bit cramped, and the exterior had art installations around the grounds. Best of all, it was closer in and cost a lot less than the Holiday Inn Express we've stayed at on past visits.

Sunday morning we started for home with a long drive through the high plains of eastern New Mexico and western Kansas to Dodge City. In Dodge City, we stayed at a Best Western Plus and were treated well. We visited the State-owned casino there, and parlayed the \$10 free play each received into \$4, so I guess you can see we 'won.' Monday we came home via Mullinville, home of M.T. Liggett, maker of the 'whirligigs' one sees along US-54 in that area.

Kansas is a long trip of prairie sites and actually easy driving in the heat. Finally found a tid bit by looking up at a cowboy riding a metal horse was looking from the ledge along a Kansas hiway. I'm not sure the other statue depicted a buffalo or a mad Indian watching the metal cowboy chase his buffalo. Lots of wind farms and feed lots out here, as well.

Must stop at this time to give recognition to last year's top tidbits, which were: The Range restaurant, named after the appliance and displaying same in Bernalillo NM – including a Holstein cow in a telephone booth calling on the phone (believe that one), and a bear guarding the lot across the street with a chain saw. This year the bear statue is there as usual.

This year's winner is the dinosaurs in Deming. Close runner-up is the stuffed buffalo displaying its innards on the floor at the Lawton museum, along with the tornado experience.

Be sure to read the blog at <http://modaytrips.blogspot.com> – not much detail but a nice selection of pictures.