

# Saturday, July 10, 2021

## Day 1 - Warrensburg to Emporia

The rain persisted when I left the house about 10:25 and headed to Warrensburg to drop off trash and buy some ice. Yep, the machine at Family Video wasn't performing, so I paid twice as much at the liquor store at South Mall (likely still the 2nd lowest in town). Finally on the road at 11:15, as the rain abated. First stop was Holden, and lunch at Andele Amigo - wow! The chile relleno was light and tasty, the way it ought to be. The salsa had bite and wasn't overly tomato-y.

Pulled out at 11:55, ran south on MO-131 to MO-2, noticing the Rock Island Trail signs at Medford and that the old school building along the road was recently painted. Turned west on MO-2 toward Harrisonville and the Kansas line. There's a "Roadway Floods" sign as you dip into the Big Creek bottoms before LaTour - no kidding?! Further on, I passed Old Drum Road in Cass County, a field of organic corn, and numerous houses with porches covering several sides of the house. The blinking light at Blinker Light Road has been removed.

MO-2 is an excellent road west of Harrisonville, with a 60 mph speed limit. The BP tank farm at Freeman is still there, less the tanks lost in a tornado a number of years back. Crossed into Kansas at 12:50; KS-68 is a pretty good road, as well. Passed a Cold Water Road (is that where they take impractical ideas?), and the Clover Cove tiger sanctuary had a lot of visitors. Louisburg's Agape Thrift Store is in an old church building. Dining customers at the cider mill were eating outside.

Passed the 5-way roundabout as I got into hilly country. The hills have climbing lanes, but nobody seems to think they're 'slower traffic.' Speed limit on this section of 2-lane road is 65. One place along the road makes deer stands; another has a pumpkin-headed scarecrow by the gate. Coming into Ottawa behind trucks exiting the Wal-Mart supply chain (distribution center), one passes Prairie Paws pet resort.

Picked up I-35 south, was passed by a p/up with 2 colorful kayaks and New Mexico plates. Hit a bad stretch of road around the 170 mm, passed working oil wells at 151. A windmill farm near Lebo was idle. Someone about 137 mm has a frisbie golf layout. Got to the Holiday Inn Express early, about 2:30, got into my room an hour later. Supper buffet at Pizza Ranch, just across the road.

Tomorrow: Cottonwood Falls, Flint Hills scenic byway, a back road from Cassoday to Newton, US-50/54 to Liberal.

Best gas prices seen in each town: Harrisonville Casey's 2.81, Freeman 2.79, Louisburg 2.83, Ottawa 2.89.

Miles for the day & the trip: 161.2

# Sunday, July 11, 2021

## Day 2 - Emporia to Liberal

After a motel breakfast of Sugar Frosted Flakes, I hit the road at 0650 just ahead of the rain. US-50 is under construction just outside of Emporia, but that cleared up in a hurry. I scared up a deer as I entered Chase County. Travel was easy as Kansas has thoughtfully added plenty of passing lanes. I turned off on KS-277 in front of the Prairie Preserve HQ at Strong City, and headed south to Cottonwood Falls and its noted courthouse (pic 1). Sandra was fascinated by William Least Heat-Moon's "Prairie Earth" book and always wanted to stop here. The Emma Chase cafe where we'd met a piano player who could handle rag time was long gone, but the Symphony in the Flint Hills art gallery is still there. So is Swope Park (yes, they have one of their own).

Going south on the Flint Hills Scenic Byway racing the rain, I had little opportunity for good pictures from the overlooks. I did see some compass plants and coneflowers before being chased back to the car. Farther south, near Bazaar, there was a nicely restored school house. Did see a weird concrete dome, about the size and shape of an igloo, entry hole included. Pioneer Bluffs is an 1859 farmstead, now owned by a non-profit. A bit further south is Matfield Green, a railroad town morphed into art community, with a trail, installations, and a steel wagon wheel sporting painted cow skulls. The next overlook provides history of the preceding locations, plus info on the cattle industry – 'stocker' cattle are shipped to the Flint Hills to feast on nutritious native grasses grown on land that's never felt a plow.

I'd planned lunch at Cassoday, but the Country Store restaurant wasn't open at 8 AM. On the way out of town on CR 150<sup>th</sup>, I passed the Piston Horse company and a yard with goats and chickens. A sign down the road reads "cowboys lives matter." This road doesn't get much traffic, so said an irate flock of buzzards I scared off a road-killed deer. This road is also designated U.S. Bike Trail 76. The rain laid off and sun peeked thru the clouds on oil wells, big bales sporting U.S. Flag patterned wrappings, a big solar farm, and a silo tree.

I arrived at Newton at 9 AM, stopped for gas, and resumed travel on US-50 toward Hutchinson, home of huge grain elevators. Now on KS-61, I passed Pretty Prairie Road and small towns like Arlington and Turan (where Lucky's gas station wasn't – now closed). Passed a 3-engine U.P. grain train on a siding, and a refinery with grain elevators - it makes ethanol. Picked up US-54 at Pratt, where I stopped at Rick's Restaurant for a 1030 breakfast. It was good, but slow. I think the waitress forgot to put in my order. The painted cement mixer tanks outside of Pratt have a fresh coat and some ivy.

Greensburg continues to recover from that F5 tornado a number of years ago, but still has much to do. The Joy Elevator stands east of Mullinville. I took a side jaunt into Mullinville to see if M.T. Liggett's whirly-gig totem poles still stand. They do, but a new house is replacing his old digs.

Power lines to serve wind farms are controversial in Missouri. I saw a huge wind farm stretching for miles between Bucklin & Minneola, along with the steel poles supporting the wires moving the power to someplace that will find it useful. The local farmers seem to have adapted; at least the crops weren't glowing. Later, I passed what looked to be an empty feedlot with shiny troughs. These might have been linings for horizontal silos, an old technique being updated. Another sight along the road: a truck toting a tank – a modern army variety.

The soil looks sandy now and the vegetation is giving way to sage and yucca. A new bridge is under construction over the Cimarron east of Liberal. On the way into town, I passed the Yippee Ki Yeah gift shop. Arrived in town at 1:50, and found my Best Western hotel. Funny, the area looked really familiar. Was it déjà vu? No, this used to be the Holiday Inn Express, where we stayed as recently as 2017. Checked in, then headed for the Mid-America Air Museum (all remaining pics). Had Sandra's favorite meal, pot roast, at the Cattlemans Cafe and returned to write this blog.

Gas prices: Emporia: 2.85, Strong City 2.85, Newton 2.75 (Jump Start), Hutchinson 2.81, Pratt 2.95, Greensburg 2.89, Mullinville 2.99, Bucklin 2.88, Meade 2.92, Liberal 2.94.

312.7 miles for the day, 474.1 for the trip. Tomorrow via US-56, US-54, back roads and I-40 to Santa Rosa.

## **Monday, July 12, 2021**

### **Day 3, Liberal to Santa Rosa**

Up by 5:30 (again), had bacon, sausage & scrambled eggs at the Best Western, hit the road at 6:41. Took US-83 north to KS-51, then west toward Hugoton. This area is high plains, llano estacado, Comancheria country. Some centerpoint irrigation, but mostly cattle – and oil (think pumps rising above corn stalks). Sandra always wanted one of those pumps for the front meadow. Hugoton is an oil town, and home of the High Plains Music Festival. Picked up US-56 there, westbound, through Rolla, KS and into the Cimmaron Nat'l Grasslands – couldn't tell the difference from what I'd been driving through.

Now heading southwesterly, Elkhorn is the last town in Kansas and is home of the Whistle Stop Park in an area that once was railroad yards. Sometimes you can tell when you cross a state line by the difference in pavement; in this case Kansas was smooth and Oklahoma was rough. In this area, US-56 is part of the Santa Fe Trail auto trail. Panhandle wheat fields are just starting harvest – I saw two grain trucks and a line of combines ready to go. The road was mostly empty, except for bunches of doves. Boise City was my 100-mile mark, time for cheaper OK gas. I'm listening to old country music on Willie's Roadhouse, XM Radio.

US-56 between Boise City and Clayton passes many broken down buildings and ghostly towns. Sandra would have clamored for a photo op stop, but those kinds of shots were her metier, not mine. I first saw Rabbit Ears mountain, the famed trail landmark, about 25 miles out.

Roads were better after I entered New Mexico near Clayton, and the speed limit dropped from 65 to 60. I saw a line of ??? on a ridge to the south. What were they? Trees? A herd? Comanches? Imagination runs wild!

Clayton has an old movie house, a noted hotel with bullet holes in the bar ceiling, and a lake with dinosaur tracks. I left town on NM-402, a road so busy that grass grows in the cracks. Roadside sights include ruins of adobe houses, Sand Draw Road, and a sign reading “Caution – blowing sand on road.”

I did see my first prairie dogs and first antelope of the trip. The only town on that 60 mile stretch is Amistad, home of the Cowboys. They won a state championship in something back in '72. The school looks deserted in the summer, but anyplace else would be one heck of a bus ride. Amistad has a well-maintained Methodist Church – the cornerstone reads United Brethren 1909.

Further along a rancher pens his Hereford bulls near the road. I passed a Fairview Cemetery, seemingly in the middle of nowhere – old foundations indicate that live people were once in the area. Working windmills feed stock tanks in a draw. Nara Visa is near the Texas border, but the Rocking Horse Woodworking & Antiques and a bar are no more. Further down I passed Palla's Shoenail Ranch, a name that raises lots of possibilities. There's a brand new bridge over the Canadian River gorge at Logan.

Tucumcari, a classic Route 66 town – home of the Mesalands dinosaur museum (closed Mondays), a local museum with an outhouse and a F-100, the Blue Swallow and other iconic motels, murals all over town, and Del's Restaurant (where Sandra & I ate whenever we stayed in town). I went for the green chile cheeseburger, too big to eat w/o a fork. Many of the motels are still running, the restaurants not as lucky.

Took off on I-40 to Santa Rosa, since there's no other rational choice. Busy, lots of trucks whizzing downhill and laboring up the other side. The hiway crosses the Goodnight-Loving trail just west of Pajarito Creek. Looked around Santa Rosa a bit, skipped the Blue Hole since it cost \$10 to park to see, maybe play, at a big sink hole, and bought some sunscreen and ice. Returned to my Holiday Inn Express and worked on this blog for a while until I could get into a room. The hotel is up-to-date, and the desk chair actually adjusts.

Supper at the Silver Moon: great salsa/chips, v.g. chiles rellenos (green), good beans, posole a bit hard.

For the day: 327.4 mi, 801.6 for the trip.

Tomorrow it's US-54 to Alamogordo, US-70 to Las Cruces, with stops at Carizozo and White Sands.

Gas: Hugoton \$2.83-2.95. Boise City \$2.75-\$2.80. Clayton \$2.99. Tucumcari \$3.05. Santa Rosa \$3.09.

## **Tuesday, July 13, 2021**

### **Day 4 - Santa Rosa to Las Cruces**

Woke up about 4, and never got back to sleep. I wanted to leave as early as possible, since US-70 was closed by a flash flood between White Sands and Las Cruces and the detour would add 80+ miles to the day. When I checked the New Mexico road site – it's a miracle, the road is back open. As I found later when driving thru the area, it was indeed a miracle. The roadside was piled with sand, cactus and yucca washed out by water cascading off the mountains.

The Holiday Inn Express was absolutely first rate. Everything worked – it was fully updated and they served the standard HIE breakfast. I hit the road at 0630, heading southwest on US-54, with a long container train climbing the ridge to the west. The road crosses a series of ridges, rendering cruise control ineffective for fuel saving. This was short grass rangeland, light colored soil and juniper trees. A snow fence ran along the northeast side of the highway, a tribute to high-altitude winter.

A trailer/RV park in Pastura, the first town along the road, includes a repurposed railroad passenger car. Cholla cactus is now more prevalent than juniper. The roadside low spots have standing water; the monsoon season has been good to New Mexico for a change. Vaughn is a major crossroads – 3 highways cross here, as do BNSF and U.P. Tracks. Non-chain motels are holding on, but many cafes are for sale. I can see mountains to the west.

Duran hosts a wind farm, apparently still under development since the blades were not turning. Yes, indeed, I had to sit for a while as a convoy of windmill parts took over the roadway. When they finally turned off, I'd lost about 20-25 minutes following them. Mountains are closing in from both sides of the road when I reach Corona, elev. 6700. These are smaller volcanic mountains; in the distant haze caused by western fires I can see significant ranges to both sides. The state is rebuilding the narrow highway here, converting it to modern 2-lane with shoulders and passing lanes – 6 miles of orange barrels slow things down.

Carrizozo, my first rest stop, was one of Sandra's favorite places. I passed a couple of ruined Evergreen containers by track side; did a train get sidewise there (a la Suez Canal), or are they crosswind casualties? Along with the painted burros and other artistic endeavors, such as the Heart of the Raven art classes, a sign reads, "New Mexico – home of the Q-Anon lizard people."

I'm now running along the foothills, mountains to the east and the Tularosa Basin to the west. I can see the black of lava flows, succeeded by fields, and eventually by white sand. I pass the entrance to Three Rivers Petroglyphs, a BLM-managed lava ridge long used by native people. A convoy of wind turbine blades passes by heading northward. There's the first pistachio grove and the Tulie MX racetrack. Tularosa has a Tulie Freeze. Between Tularosa and Alamogordo, there's the world's largest pistachio nut (Missourians have the world's largest pecan, at Brunswick) and Bowlin's Running Indian trading post (read: tourist trap). Alamogordo has a toy train depot at the train museum in the park.

Sandra loved White Sands for the photo ops it offered, as well as the chance to be a kid and play in the sand. I lathered on the sunscreen and braved the considerable heat to take pictures. After White Sands, one passes the Border Patrol checkpoint (which I'll have to go thru on Thursday). The flooded area came next, eliciting a chorus of Wows! Each debris pile was more impressive than its predecessor.

Arrived in Las Cruces about 12:30, dropped off 9 boxes of books at COAS bookstore, giving me \$150+ of credit toward buying more books. Checked into my Holiday Inn Express to cool off and plan to meet Sandra's Uncle Murray after 4 PM.

Met Uncle Murray about 5. The first place we tried is open lunchtime only, so we went to Village Inn. They had a halfway decent green sauce on their enchiladas, so it was OK. Went back to his apartment and chatted. He'll be 90 next month. Tomorrow we do some book shopping, have a couple of good meals, and swap stories some more.

For the day: 271.8 mi, 1073.4 for the trip.  
Tomorrow it's around Las Cruces

Gas: Vaughn \$3.29, Corona \$3.10, Carrizozo \$3.09, Tularosa \$2.99, Alamogordo \$2.65-2.99, Las Cruces

## Wednesday, July 14, 2021

### Day 5 - Around Las Cruces

Got up about 6:30, wondering how I managed that. Hotel breakfast was miserable: cold (& late) micro-omelette, blah turkey sausage, halfway decent B&G. The only high point was whole milk. Scouted to find the second location for COAS Books, then picked up Murray. We had a bit of time to kill, so we wandered up and down Las Cruces' Main St to see the sights and visit a street market – anyone want a \$20 bag of red chiles (medium, hot or xtra hot)?

Our target was the best used bookstore I've ever visited. Location 1, I picked up some mysteries on my 'want' list. Location 2 yielded another couple of mysteries, plus some CW books of interest to Missourians. The staff there suggested Las Trancas restaurant across the street. Excellent chiles relleno (green), a bit more than I could eat. Then it was back to Murray's apartment, where I showed him the pictures I'd selected for Sandra's Celebration of Life – when I can get it scheduled. We talked a lot.

Supper was at Si Senor, a fancy restaurant. Their green was hot but tasty. Murray's quesadilla was big enough for 3 meals.

One “tid-bit” for the day noted while I was waiting for Murray to pick up a scrip at Albertson's: A man came out with a loaf of french bread sticking out of his backpack and rode away on a Harley.

Now: early to bed!

For the day: 23.1 mi, 1096.6 for the trip.  
Tomorrow: Las Cruces to Las Vegas

Gas: Las Cruces \$2.99

## Thursday, July 15, 2021

### Day 6 - Las Cruces to Las Vegas

No pictures today

Got to bed early last night, and woke up early this morning, so turned on TV to watch a bit of 'The Open.' Motel breakfast was slightly better, but I picked up Murray for a real breakfast at his favorite spot, Village Inn. We said our goodbyes, then I hit the road at 10:10. Went thru San Augustin Pass, elev. 5755, and dropped back down into the Tularosa Basin. NM road crews had cleared a lot of the debris from Monday's floods, but plenty still remains. Playas still have standing water, just not as much as they did Tuesday.

The Border Patrol checkpoint opposite White Sands entrance was active. Question, “U.S. Citizen?” Answer: 'You betcha!’ And on I went. Passed a Greyhound bus that seemed to have been in an accident. Pulled into Alamogordo for gas at \$2.75, got back on US-54 bypass, and headed north. A windmill blade convoy sat on the roadside just outside of Tularosa, giving me hope that there'd be no convoy delays.

The only interesting sights between there and Carrizozo were the white haze to the west from blowing sand, and the 2 dust devils crossing the desert. Carrizozo, elev 5422, is the western gateway to Billy the Kid and Smokey Bear territory (BTW, when did Smokey lose his middle name – 'the'?). Further north, my hope of avoiding the blade runners was dashed. Not only was I behind another convoy, I was right at the beginning of a single lane construction zone entering some mountains.

Came out of the construction area, went thru Corona (elev. 6675 – I'd bet some of that area was over 7,000). Now on more open ground with better roads, made better time until I reached Vaughn (elev. 5598). It's now 4 hours since my last break, so I stopped at one of the 2 gas stations for comfort and a pre-made burrito, then continued on US-54. I hadn't caught up with the convoy before it finally turned off toward a mesa. I turned off, as well, at Pastura.

NM-219 took me into mesa country, showing multi-colored strata. Everything else was green thanks to a wet monsoon season. Pinon and juniper trees are frequent. Crossed I-40 and was now on US-84, aka old Route 66, Santa Fe route. I saw rain to the northwest – the direction I was heading. Outran the first storm, evaded the 2<sup>nd</sup> one. Tidbits: there's a strange small pyramid atop one of the mesas. A house in Los Montoyos has a horno and a nice woodpile to fire it.

Hit I-25 a few miles south of Las Vegas, found my Best Western & checked in. Went to Pino's cafe for the worst food I've ever tasted in New Mexico. Now enjoying a Pistol Pete's 1888 blonde ale from a Las Cruces brewery.

For the day: 294.5 mi, 1391.2 for the trip.  
Tomorrow: Las Vegas to Dodge City

Gas: Las Cruces \$2.99, Las Vegas \$3.09 & up.

## **Friday, July 16, 2021**

### **Day 7 - Las Vegas to Dodge City**

Didn't get to bed quite as early as I'd hoped yesterday – TV had some Looney Tunes on. Got up about 5:30 and was packed and loaded by the time motel breakfast started at 6:15, Off and rolling at 6:41, heading north on I-25. Said “goodbye” to the Sangre de Cristos, as I drove through the unusually green prairie countryside with pools of recent rain water. The road was a bit rough in spots – I've noticed that New Mexico road surfaces seem to deteriorate by losing tiny bits of their surface, leaving a feeling similar to a slightly uneven gravel road.

Exited onto NM-120 at Wagon Mound (elev. 6201), named after the Santa Fe Trail landmark butte that, from a distance, resembled a wagon with 2 yoke of oxen. It was about a day's travel from Ft. Union. See what you think:

Temperature is 64, and many small birds scared up off the asphalt road as I drove through. I managed to miss these, although a couple of others further on weren't so lucky. I was surprised to still have 4 bars cell service well away from the interstate – possibly because towers are placed on high mesas and there are few trees to block line-of-sight. It didn't last long, unfortunately.

The Canadian River cuts a spectacular gorge through the high plains. It's a tributary of the Arkansas River, rising in the Sangre de Cristos. One of its tributaries is the "wet" Cimarron, and the Cimarron cut-off of the Santa Fe Trail crossed it further north, near Springer. I took a few pictures.

On the way out of the gorge en route to Roy, I saw a modern variation of traditional graffiti: "Ernie (heart) Carlos." Roy (elev 5896) is a small crossroads town, notable for being the place where Bob Wills developed his style of music:

Just out of Roy, I saw a little bit of folk art – a traditional little green man standing in front of a miniature space capsule. This 40+ mile stretch of NM-120 has enough traffic that its center is not yet overgrown by plants invading from the shoulders and narrowing the lanes. There are only a few large ranches along the way, plus a nice sampling of deserted homesteads:

I finally reached US-56, which isn't particularly busy, either. Some sections have a double snow fence on their north side. I think Sandra would have napped through this stretch. One old building had a drawing of a skeletal animal – reminded me of fossils. Clayton (elev. 5050), is the last town in New Mexico, and it's had less rain, judging by the pastures. One thing struck me about some farms seen against a far horizon – they looked like frontier forts, with tall grain bins serving as blockhouses.

The last 9 miles from Clayton to the Oklahoma line took an hour 13 – not really, I'd just moved from MDT to CDT. Stopped at Boise City (elev. 4167) for gas at \$1.75. Crossed into Kansas at 12 noon at Elkhart. Between there and Rolla, I saw a figure made of pipes holding up a big bale – think Atlas holding up the world. Hugoton, KS, has a Shady Lane B&B (hey, I can't help myself – after 28 years in the business, I notice B&Bs).

If anyone's looking to plant or grind some wheat, you can find all you need growing along the roadsides in western Kansas. Near Moscow, KS, large stacks of rotting square big bales are collapsing. The other Cimarron (aka 'dry') River crosses US-56 between Moscow and Satanta -yep, it was bone dry. Satanta, named for a Kiowa chief, has a concrete tepee in a park and a White Bear Inn. [Aside: Sandra & I have driven through both Satanta, OK, and Quanah, TX, and have seen the graves of both noted warriors on Chiefs Hill at Fort Sill.]

Sublette, named for the famed mountain man and guide, is the original home of one of our favorite restaurants, Cattleman's Cafe. I stopped for an outstanding chicken fried steak. Going into Montezuma, I passed a feed yard that stretched for a mile along the hiway. All Montezuma's streets have Spanish names. Their team is the South Gray (county) Rebels, with a logo of a soldier waving a saber – wearing a blue uniform.

Got to Dodge City a bit before 3 PM and checked into a new and modern Holiday Inn Express. No supper, lunch was too good.

For the day: 357.8 mi, 1749.0 for the trip.  
Tomorrow: Dodge City - Home

Gas: \$2.84-2.89



# Saturday, July 17, 2021

## Day 8 - Dodge City to Home

Up early as usual, this time after a decent night's sleep. Sat around for a while waiting for 6:30 breakfast at the hotel – late as usual, but at least the sausage tasted good. Hit the road at 6:48, temp 73° and sky threatening. Westbound Amtrak was boarding at the depot as I drove by. The freight yard was full of cars; among them were several carrying Boeing passenger aircraft fuselages, well wrapped. The Welcome to Dodge City sign was topped by metal cowboys. A “scenic overlook” promised a great view of a large feed lot.

I picked up US-50 eastbound, below a gloomy, cloud-filled sky. The next town, Spearville, had its own “scenic overlook” - this time of a wind farm. I think 'underlook' might have been a better description. Kinsley hosts the Do Drop Inn motel. It also is near the junction of Coon Creek & the Arkansas River, scene of an 1848 battle between troops headed for the Mexican War and Comanches. Trees line the north side of highways east of this area. A building in Mackville is home of The Jerk Rope – no indication whether it refers to towing or roping, nor what the building houses.

As I hit Stafford, I hit rain, which becomes heavier the further east I go. Reno County, Sylvia (“Who is Sylvia, what is she...”). Hutchinson – still raining, but I can see clear spots ahead! Turn off the wipers, but here comes another heavy rain band at Burton, fortunately pretty narrow. A sign in front of a barn along the road: “When I die, don't let me vote Democratic.”

Stopped at Newton for a gas & comfort break, then back onto 50. Passed the Whistlestop Cafe in Walton, not too bad when we ate there several years ago. Crossing the RR overpass at Peabody, I caught a glimpse of a windmill blade on a train below. A 5-way roundabout waits for drivers at Florence's US-77 junction.

Now I'm entering the Flint Hills. Graffiti on a train that I pass: “Dope fiend xpress” and two 'cloak-and-dagger' figures, carrying bombs. The Clover Cliff Ranch B&B overlooks the Cottonwood River valley, home of quite a few stone houses. 4 hours and 240 miles into the day, I pick up I-35 at Emporia – maybe I can make some time now that I'm off 2-lane roads. Approaching Ottawa, I see more rain ahead.

K-68 is definitely the home stretch, and XM Radio is playing Prof. Peter Schickele, 'discoverer' of PDQ Bach's music. The clouds dump on me for a while. At the 46 mm, a metal mule sits on a post. A silo tree stands just east of the US-169 exit. Louisburg now has Enigma 68 Escape Rooms. Back in Missouri at 12 noon, eager for my lunch break at Annie's 58 in Holden. A couple of stops in Warrensburg for milk and gas, and I'm home at 2:06 PM. Only 1.15” in my rain ga, all trees still standing.

Tomorrow: My trip summary, and where to find the best gas prices along my route.

For the day 380.8 miles, for the trip 2129.8

## 2021 Trip Summary

2129.8 miles driven over parts of 8 days, 2060 less breaks and Las Cruces urban driving with 40 hours actual driving time.

Gas used approximately 69 gallons. Average MPG a bit over 30; best stretch was over days 6 & 7 (Alamogordo to Boise City) at 34+ mpg – this was over 400 miles.

I used gasbuddy.com to see which areas and stations would have the best gas prices, based on my estimated range and comfort zone for my 16 gallon tank (while price levels may change, relative prices between towns/ stations are fairly constant):

Newton KS: Jump Start on 1<sup>st</sup> street east of I-335/US50.

Boise City OK: Toot n Totem on US-56/64/412 on east side of town

Alamogordo, NM: Murphy Express (Walmart) , Bus 54/70 south side of town

Warrensburg – Short Stop (Valero), Mitchell & DD

**Lodging:** I stayed at Holiday Inn Expresses, mostly using points accumulated in prior years. When the HIE was not available or too expensive (would cost too many points), I stayed at Best Westerns.

Best hotel facilities: HIE Dodge City – new, modern hotel. Walk-in shower, good lighting, big TV (2<sup>nd</sup> recent stay). Breakfast acceptable, but no milk.

Also good: HIE Santa Rosa – either new or totally renovated to modern amenities. Good hotel breakfast.

HIE Las Cruces – partially updated. Breakfast sub-par

BW Liberal - Best hotel breakfast, 2 meats plus B&G. Room fine.

HIE Emporia – good room, terrible breakfast. No hot items (covid protocols)

A cut below: BW Las Vegas (NM). Room OK, breakfast served w/ lots of choices. No milk.

A note: Don't use on-line check in if you tend to arrive early – they couldn't change my room assignment to one already cleaned, had to wait a solid hour.

**Dining:** I did not eat at any fast food places on this trip. All were sit-down.

Mexican: Best chiles relleno – Andale Amigo in Holden, MO. Salsa had bite, rice & beans good.

Las Trancas in Las Cruces – Taste not quite as good as the others, but it was only one de-seeded. Posole side decent.

Silver Moon in Santa Rosa – Relleno/green was good, beans decent, hominy in posole hard.

Acceptable: Si Senior in Las Cruces – Noted for choice of sauces. Food decent, not memorable.

Terrible: Pino's in Lsa Vegas – ground beef in enchiladas had funny taste, beans blah. Indifferent server (bad enough that I didn't tip at all – I normally leave \$2 minimum).

American: 3 really good meals, 1 good breakfast, 2 acceptable places.

Cattleman's Cafe 1 in Sublette – best chicken fried steak in quite a while

Cattleman's Cafe 2 in Liberal – really good pot roast

Annie's 58 Drive In, Holden – good hot beef sandwich, side green beans good

Rick's Restaurant, Pratt – Bacon & eggs good.

Village Inn, Las Cruces – chain restaurant, green on their Mexican entree good. Breakfast OK

Pizza Ranch, Emporia – buffet, pizza OK, other items blah. Didn't try fried chicken.

Total cost of trip about \$1000, plus 5 free room-nights. Cat boarding single largest item.