

2007 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.

Monday, April 23, 2007

Heading for the Southwest

Tomorrow AM (official start time of Oh-Dark-Thirty) we hit the road for points southwest. I'll be posting pictures on our website, www.missouridaytrips.com, as well as daily reports here. Keep up as you wish.

Tuesday, April 24, 2007

Day 1 - Warrensburg to Garden City

Got off at 6:00 AM, avoided Kansas City, and headed into Kansas. Gas price when we left was \$2.55. Stopped for gas in McPherson KS (\$2.81) and lunch at a McDs in Great Bend. At Larned, we stopped at the Santa Fe Trail Center - a neat little museum with trail history, a sod house and more (pictures posted). Then to Ft. Larned NHS where we toured the old fort and took lots of pictures. Then to Garden City, where we arrived at 4:35 PM. Dinner at Cattlemen's Cafe (where we've eaten in Sublette & Liberal on earlier trips), staying in a nice HI Express.

Wednesday, April 25, 2007

Wednesday 4/25 - AM

Seen along the road on Tuesday:

- Oil well pumps painted in all kinds of colors - green & orange, red & blue, even more.
- Sod house & dugout house interior - dirt floors!
- on KS 68 past Louisburg, a little house on an island in a pond - called Grumpy Al's Place
- On radio station out of Wichita, playing Leroy Van Dyke (Sedalia's own) - 1070 AM
- Lyons has lots of murals and celebrate Coronado searching for Quivara - Pueblo folks sure got him out of the way.
- Great Bend "Kiowa Kitchen Best Mexican Restaurant"

Gas - best place in central KS was Great Bend, \$2.68/gal. It's back to \$2.79 in Garden City. Must be the oil wells.

Added 2 pictures to the site. Also, I bought my lifetime "geezer pass" to National Parks - \$10 for 62 & up, and I'm definitely there.

Breakfast at this HIE was excellent - we had a choice of B&G, bkfst burritos, hash browns, brand name cereals, milk, juices (several types), rolls, bagels, etc. Not B&B quality, but the motels are catching up.

Also, each bed had 2 firm pillows & 2 soft pillows. The beds are triple-sheeted with a duvet. Spa & pool were open 24 hours. "Know the competition."

Today we head for Raton via Capulin Volcano.

Wednesday 4/25 - PM

Wednesday evening. It was a cold & windy day. We left Garden City about 7:30 AM and drove into a headwind; mostly on US-160 which takes us to Springfield & near Branson (yes, Colorado has towns of the same names - on the same road!). Drove thru miles and miles without seeing anything human except the scattered ranch and abandoned house. Those few towns after Springfield had no facilities. After Branson, we went thru a pass into the Raton Volcano field and our first pictures.

First stop was Folsom NM, where we hoped to visit the local tiny museum with info about an important find - flint points embedded in 10,000 YO bison bones; previous to this find, most scientific opinion was that humans had only been in the Americas for 3,000 years. The museum was closed, but we did finally find something to eat - the Folsom Village Inn, Restaurant, Bar & Dance Hall - we split a tasty but expensive BBQ sandwich.

Then it was on to Capulin Volcano. Ever tried to walk the rim of an 8,000 ft volcano in 30 mph winds? We didn't. Just took some pictures (see the website) and on to Raton.

Some comments on the HIE here - TP was pointed and had a gold seal. The desk called to make sure everything was OK. A significant evening snack in the breakfast area. A welcome package (yes, commercial giveaway stuff, but still there in our room). Menu book at the front desk. B&B folks - they are going after us!

Miles driven: 281 plus 15 local. Travel/sightseeing time 7:15

Thursday, April 26, 2007

Thursday, 4/26 AM

It's 29 at Raton this AM. It'll be in the 70s at Albuquerque when we get there this afternoon - it's a good day for the layered look. We'll see Santa Fe, walk around the Plaza, visit some museums, and eat some more good New Mexico cuisine. One stop will be the cafe where I took the prize-winning picture called "Santa Fe Courtyard" last year. Then it's the Turquoise Trail to Albuquerque, have dinner with Madge Harrah, who wrote the childrens' book about Blind Boone (& many other books), and her husband, and prepare for tomorrow (PowWow, museums, food!).

HIE breakfast today included mini-omeletes & sausage.

Thursday, 4/26, PM

A long & busy day. Left Raton at 7:10 AM heading for Santa Fe. First stop was Las Vegas (NM, that is - no casinos), where we had a 'small world' moment - turns out that a manager at the C-store where we stopped for a comfort break knows Sandra's uncle!

Got to Santa Fe around 10:15 and emptied our pockets of quarters to pay the parking meter. Toured the Palace of the Governors, the Art Museum and around the Plaza. We ate at The Shed Cafe, where we sat at the same table as last year - blue corn tacos (smothered) with posole - that's where I took the Santa Fe Courtyard picture that won some contests for me last year (available at www.missouridaytrips.com, travel, trip 06). Good thing we didn't need gas - it was \$3.19 at some Santa Fe stations.

Took the Turquoise Trail down toward Albuquerque, stopping at 10,628 ft Sandia Crest - what a view. After checking into the motel, we met Madge & Larry Harrah (whom we met through her book about Blind Boone) for dinner at Garcia's. Scrumptious.

HIE Motel is nice, but it's not what the previous two were.

Friday, April 27, 2007

Friday 4/27 AM

Not entirely happy with this HIE - cramped room, breakfast with no hot dish, shower not as good. We were spoiled. And we're here for 3 nights.

Now to today's activities - we're going to the All Nations Pow Wow & the Maxwell Museum of Anthropology. Pictures are allowed at both. Dinner will be in Old Town.

Friday 4/27 PM

What a day! We started out after that very blah breakfast and headed for the University of New Mexico's Maxwell Museum of Anthropology. It concentrates on the early people of the Southwest, with a reproduction of a dig site at Chaco Canyon, then showed the stages of settlement of the SW.

Then, we headed for The Pit, as UNM's arena is called, for the All Nations Powwow. Saw more color and fancy work than you can imagine. The vendor area was a huge tent, with vendors, mostly Indian, selling about anything you can imagine in dancing gear, music, books, jewelry and more - all Indian, of course. Had an Indian Taco for lunch, then found a seat in the arena for the Grand Entry. Think of the grand entry at a rodeo lasting 45 minutes, with over 3,000 contestants dancing their way in!

We saw a lot of different types of dances in the next 3 hours, very athletic in some cases. I took about 90 pictures, and will post a few after a trip to the hot tub.

Saturday, April 28, 2007

Saturday 4/28 - AM

Slept very well last night, so should be ready for a full day of museums today. Albuquerque Museum of Art, Museum of Science & Natural History, Pueblo Cultural Center, and maybe the geology museum at UNM if it's open Saturdays. Then maybe we'll do some shopping - we found some thrift shops along various streets. Or maybe we'll run up to a State Monument pueblo ruins in Bernalillo. It's certainly too windy to go to Petroglyphs National Monument (last year it was cold & windy, this year would be

warm & windy). Also we're looking for a cheap price on pinon coffee. We'll likely take another drive down Central Ave (old Rt 66).

We were either lucky or smart yesterday - heard on the morning news that some people waited 2-3 hours to get into the All Nations Powwow - Wow! If you're ever considering attending it, plan to order your tickets in advance or get there early.

Saturday 4/28 - PM

Another great day! We first drove down Old 66 (now Central Ave) to the Albuquerque Museum of Art. We had 20+ minutes of AM sun for picture taking at the sculpture garden, then a tour of the various art - it's OK, the picture I liked best last November is no longer on display. Then it was a walk in the park across the road to the NM Museum of Natural History & Science. Dinosaurs, earthquakes, volcanos and the Chixulub impact. Neat!

Lunch at Tony Hillerman's favorite restaurant, the Frontier. Posole for me, enchilada for Sandra. Back west to the Pueblo Cultural Center, where interpretation at the museum has been upgraded since our last trip. And more - Apache dancers were there to put on a show (yes, pictures). About 2:30 we left for Coronado State Monument, a pueblo site from 1300-1600. The ranger was from nearby Santa Ana Pueblo and we talked for a while, took some pictures. Then we headed back south to meet Madge & Larry for supper.

Tomorrow, we're off to Acoma.

Sunday, April 29, 2007

Sunday, 4/29 - AM

Getting ready to head out of Albuquerque to Acoma & El Malpais. We're running pretty early so will stop at Petroglyphs National Monument. It was cold last time we were there. This motel is not up to what we consider HIE standards - shower not as good, short on washcloths, inconvenient ice machine. Location was convenient, though.

Tonight in Grants. Hope it's better.

Sunday, 4/29 - PM

We're at the HIE in Grants NM, after a very busy day. I'm having some internet access problems, so may not get the pictures posted. This AM, we went to Petroglyphs National Monument just west of Albuquerque. We went there last year and froze our begonias off - it was a lot nicer today.

Next (after a short visit to the Sky City Casino) we took the Acoma Pueblo tour. That's the one on an isolated 370 ft mesa, home of outstanding pottery. Lots of pictures. Finally, we went to a couple of sites in El Malpais National Monument.

Only 165 miles today, but a full day anyway.

Monday, April 30, 2007

Monday 4/30 - AM

Never got the pictures processed yesterday, and there's a good chance I won't get today's done either. Today is our 30th Anniversary and we'll go out for a real dinner tonight - at Chinle AZ. The agenda today is I-40 to Thoroeau, a state road thru Crown Point (home of the rug auctions), the Bisti Wilderness to Farmington, then across to Ship Rock, south to Navaho Rt 33 to visit the actual Ship Rock, then thru Lukachukai Pass to Lukachukai Trading Post (a small world story last year) where Sandra hopes she'll find me an Anniversary present (I bought hers at Open Door Thrift in Sedalia back in Feb), and then on to Chinle and Canyon de Chelly. Will there be lots of pictures? You bet. Will I have the time to post any? Ha! Tomorrow even more - we'll take our tour in Canyon de Chelly and thank Spider Woman for her Rock winning ribbons for me.

Oh, the motel. Wifi worked this AM in the room, great comfy beds, shower fine. Big room, lots of space.

Tuesday, May 01, 2007

Tuesday, May 1 - AM

We're waiting for our tour guide to arrive at 9 AM. Gave me time to process pictures from the last two days and get them posted. Yay!

Today, we take a Jeep tour up Canyon de Chelly (tse gi) to Spider Rock. Hope to hear lots of good stories. Will get back maybe 2 PM, then take a drive along the rim for more pictures. Should use up both batteries.

Motel is a Holiday Inn. Towels aren't as nice as HIE, and restaurant is expensive. Nice room, and we can load the car thru a sliding door.

More tonight - and I hope lots and lots of pictures.

I see I didn't comment last night - we drove thru some pretty spectacular scenery to the Bisti Badlands, then to Farmington and across to Ship Rock. Lunch was a burger on frybread. Drove over a rutty road about 2 miles, halfway to the rock, and took lots of pictures. Stopped at the Red Rock Trading Post mentioned in many Hillerman novels, then went on to climb Lukachukai pass where we celebrated our 30th Anniversary on an overlook. Drove down the other side, stopped at Totsoh Trading post (see last year's comments from Phoenix) in Lukachukai, then on to Chinle. Here, we had dinner at the motel, expensive but it WAS our anniversary. A full day - 264 miles.

Tuesday, May 1 - PM

Another very full day. After a hot breakfast at the Thunderbird Lodge (the HI is too high), we got ready for our trip to Spider Rock. Adam Teller, (a local Navajo with an anthropology degree) of Antelope House Tours picked us up in a brand new top-end Jeep at 9 and we were off to the canyon. Lots of

pictures, some good stories, and a much better feel for life in the canyon. 5 hours later, we got back to the motel, downloaded my pictures, and headed back out - this time for a tour of the rim overlooks. This tour was rather damp, but we still took a lot of pictures and met some interesting vendors at the overlooks. Said our final goodbye to Spider Rock and came back (listening to KCNN, Navajo Radio) to find our parking place still there. Amazing.

On the email - our farmwatcher, George, sent a picture of the kittens, who are out of the nursery box and gallivanting across the kitchen. It will be interesting when we return.

Sorry, no pictures tonight. Maybe I'll get caught up tomorrow.

Wednesday, May 02, 2007

Wednesday, 5/2 - AM

Today we leave Chinle & Canyon de Chelly for other sites & sights. After a hot breakfast, we'll head for the Hopi Mesas & hope to visit their museum. Pictures are limited on the Hopi reservation. Then, we'll visit Sunset Crater, a volcano north of Flagstaff and perhaps the Wupatki ruins. Another possible side trip is the great falls of the Little Colorado, depending on time & what we hear. Finally, we plan to stop at Meteor Crater, a place that we've always had to bypass because of time.

No time to post yesterday's pictures yet, but [you can see our 2005 pictures of Canyon de Chelly](#)

Wednesday, 5/2 - PM

Only took 37 pictures today - it was rainy this AM and the Hopi don't allow photographs. We toured the Hopi Museum at Walpi, then drove thru a lot more empty country to Leupp. From there, we took an unscheduled side trip on bumpy gravel(?) roads to Grand Falls of the Little Colorado. The falls were dry.

Next stop was Sunset Crater National Monument north of Flagstaff. A 1000-year-old cinder cone that affected indigenous people of the time and is reflected in their oral records. Due to time constraints, we skipped the connected site, Wupatki.

Then, it was east on I-40 to Meteor Crater - finally got to see it after having to bypass it in 1961, 2002 & 2006. Drove thru Winslow Arizona - did you know they have a "Standing on the Corner" Park?

Stopped at the HIE in Holbrook. Had dinner at a buffet with some really neat murals, inside & out. Drove old 66 & saw a Wigwam Motel, with a lot of old 50s cars parked around it.

Distance - 340 miles.

Thursday, May 03, 2007

Thursday, 5/3 - AM

Day 10 - a good night's sleep and we're heading generally eastward. Today's route is thru Arizona mountains to Show Low & Eager, then southward thru New Mexico's Mogollon mtns thru Alma to Silver City. The highlight will be a side trip from Silver City to Gila Cliff Dwelling National Monument. Tonight our only non-HI stop, a Comfort Inn (the HIE was full). Hope to have time to get the pictures caught up tonight.

Thursday, 5/3 - PM

Whew - what a lot of mountain driving. We left Holbrook at 7 AM, but lost an hour when we went into NM. After a few miles of desert we went into a series of volcanic mountains. Stopped at the Chamber at Springerville AZ, where they have info and tours of an ancient pueblo we'd never heard of. Then thru more mountains in New Mexico, where we met the Gila Bicycle tour. I guess Missouri will be like that this fall.

The main attraction today was Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument. While at a comfort stop, I read the literature we picked up at Springerville - "allow 2 hours each way." C'mon, it's only 43 miles. Yep, 43 miles, not more than 1/4 miles of which at a time is straight, and the curvy parts (like most of the road) are either climbing or descending. The cliff dwellings themselves are among the few you can actually walk thru. Only inhabited between 1270-1300 AD, a non-Mimbres group but part of the Mogollon culture, they say. Sorry, still running behind on pictures.

Dinner at the same place we ate at 5 years ago when we went thru here, and just as GOOD! We recommend La Cocina in Silver City. Jury is still out on the Comfort Inn here.

Sandra's high point - when she went into a Silver City grocery store to buy beer, SHE WAS CARDED! Not too often one can get a Senior discount and be carded the same day!

Miles: 326, time on road or sightseeing - 10:15

Friday, May 04, 2007

Friday, 5/4 - AM

This Comfort Inn was "OK" - nothing wrong with it but not the same quality as most HIEs. Does have a hot breakfast, though (make your own waffles)- if we get any with all the cyclists.

Today we visit City of Rocks State Park, then go on to meet Sandra's Uncle Murray in Las Cruces, finishing up at White Sands & spending the night in Alamogordo. High winds predicted for today, we'll see how that affects things.

Friday, 5/4 - PM

Another big day. We left Silver City about 7 AM and went to City of Rocks State Park. For you

Missourians, it reminded me of Elephant Rocks, but the rock is volcanic tuff rather than granite. The park is essentially a neat place to camp, with campsites scattered among the rocks.

Then we drove down to Deming, in kind of a barren area, and stopped at the local welcome center, which included an old steam engine. Then it was on to Las Cruces to visit Sandra's Uncle Murray. Then, over the hill to White Sands - it was very windy and the sand was blowing, making a light haze.

We're now at a very nice HIE in Alamogordo. Tomorrow's a long day, with stops at Cloudcroft, Ruidoso, Lincoln (Billy the Kid) & Roswell before going on to Levelland TX (outside of Lubbock). It'll be a long day and we're shooting for an early start, so don't expect a morning post.

Friday AM Addendum - Gas Prices

Gas prices, whew. At regular gas stations, we paid a high of \$3.17 at Chinle, AZ. We saw stations at \$3.29 in other places, where we found other stations for \$2.99. In Silver City, the going rate is \$3.15. The most? I forgot to get gas in Silver City before going out to Gila Cliff Dwellings and all those mountain roads had me worried. Fortunately, a little trading post out there had gas. I paid \$10 for 2.7 gallons - that's \$3.64/gal - but it's better than running out on a mountaintop in the absolute middle of nowhere.

Saturday, May 05, 2007

Saturday 5/5 - PM

From Levelland TX (just west of Lubbock). Got up real early this AM because it looked like it would be a long day. Went up a scenic climb to Cloudcroft - the drive was scenic but we didn't see anything at Cloudcroft to take pictures of. Then it was cross country to Ruidoso, thru the Mescalero Apache reservation - lots of horses in the little valleys. Stopped at their casino (Inn of the Mountain Gods) and donated a few \$. Over the hill to Lincoln, a neat little town noted for the Lincoln County War & Billy the Kid. On to Roswell, where we found that the UFO museum is now charging \$5 to visit, the money going to moving out of downtown. We decided we like it downtown so instead went to the art museum - some nice pictures there, some Peter Hurds, even an O'Keeffe. Most interesting was a large 3-panel painting of a Pow Wow - looked just like the one we saw.

Miles: 303.

Sunday, May 06, 2007

Sunday, 5/6 - AM

Sunday AM - We're off to Oklahoma today - weather does not look good as we'll be traveling thru and stopping in an area the Weather Channel shows in red. We won't be anywhere near Greensburg KS, but we've been thru it several times. Fairly short travel day today because the museums in Lubbock aren't open, but that gives us time to see some in Lubbock & Ft. Sill (if they're not blown away before we get there).

Sunday, 5/6 - PM

Didn't have all that far to drive today - missed the weather so far. Went thru a lot of flat country, broken up by eroded river bottoms - turned out to be pretty scenic. Got to Lawton about 1:30 & checked in to our HIE. Then went to their regional Museum of the Great Plains, then out to Ft. Sill. The post museum was closed & a bridge was out leading to Geronimo's grave, but we did get to visit the graves of Quanah Parker & Satanta. Drove from there out to the Washita Mountains Nat'l Wildlife Refuge, went thru their visitor center/museum and drove around looking at buffalo. Dinner at Cracker Barrel (the BBQ place we were looking for was closed) & made a donation at the Comanche casino.

Tomorrow AM we're heading for Oklahoma City to see the state museum. After that, we may hit another museum, take old 66 to Tulsa, visit the Gilcrease and end up at the Cherokee Casino.

Miles from Lubbock to Lawton - 303

Miles after checking in in Lawton - 82

Monday, May 07, 2007

Monday, 5/7 - PM

Monday evening - I didn't post this AM ... because there was a thunderstorm in Lawton. We left after the rain had gone thru and visited the Oklahoma History museum in OKC - yes, they do have operating oil wells on the Capitol lawn. It's a very well done museum and I learned a few facts I didn't previously know. We left OKC on old 66 hiway, but ran into some heavy rain and switched to the Turnpike. Also, we skipped the Gilcrease because it would have put us driving thru Tulsa in the rain during rush hour. We checked in at 3 PM, got settled, then went to the Cherokee Casino. Lots of specials today. We each got \$5 free play for being new members, \$5 for seniors day, and Sandra got \$5 for ladies' night - plus 2/1 buffet. We ended up playing for a couple of hours, found some hot machines, and walked out after giving them back only \$5 of what they gave us.

Tomorrow's plans have changed a bit, as well. A lot of the creeks & rivers around here are really flooding, so we'll skip Old 66 and stay on I-44 to Joplin. We'll plan to visit the museum there, then boogie on home to meet the kittens (and take care of everything that has been piling up - the worst part of a vacation).

Only a very few pictures today; I'll post when we get home.

Tuesday, May 08, 2007

Tuesday, 5/8 - PM

Home at last! Pulled in at 2:30 PM after 15 days and 3693 miles in 7 states. We were greeted by Scruffy (our horse) who wanted food & hugging, Miss Topsy (the stray cat) and her 4 kittens - 2 black with blue eyes, 2 white with a spot on the head. Also, grass from 6 inches to 1 foot high and a rain gauge containing 3 1/4 inches of water and a drowned bumblebee. Took over an hour to get all the credit card expenses into Quicken. I think we're finally unpacked and a load of laundry done. I see no damages here from any of the storms, so that's OK. It will be good to 'sleep in' in our own bed after 15

nights in motels.

What did we do today? Well, we left Tulsa in the middle of a big thunderstorm and I missed a road sign - so we took a somewhat longer road (US-412 & 69 instead of I-44) but still made good time. Because of flooding problems, we'd decided to skip old 66, so our only travel stop was the local museum in Joplin - the mining museum was excellent, but they knew nothing about Melissa Fuell (a leading Black educator from the area - she wrote a book about Blind Boone and sang with him), nor did they have anything on noted ragtime composer James Scott (first published in Carthage, the County Seat). Makes one wonder.

According to the car's computer, we averaged 20.5 mpg at an average of 44.3 mph. We stayed at 9 different Holiday Inn Expresses, 1 Holiday Inn, and 1 Comfort Inn. The worst of the HIEs was better than the Comfort Inn. Ate a lot of great Mexican/Southwestern food (green, please) and some good BBQ (no, it wasn't KC, but still OK). Visited 4 indian casinos (Acoma, Mescalero Apache, Comanche & Cherokee) and in the end broke even. Saw statues by Ft. Sill Apache sculptor Alan Houser at Ruidoso, Lawton & Oklahoma City - we recognized his style pretty easily.

I'll probably write a bit more after we recover. Sandra has 50 pages of notes & comments, so she'll transcribe them as I do the pictures and before long we'll have a whiz-bang web page for our trip.