

On Wednesday, after Santa Fe, we went to visit Madge & Larry Harrah, Albuquerque. They knew we would be at their house by 5PM. At 5PM, we were there and went to Garcia's (their favorite) restaurant, and we talked about their cabin which Larry was closing down....200 miles from Albuquerque, and he has to drive thru Chama to go back into the mountains. We had seen the road in the valley that went to their cabin. They completely shut-down cabin....it is covered with 200 feet of snow and snowmobilers do use their roof as a launching pad.

Madge was thrilled about her Blind Boone CD and some other things we brought to her. She has not been well, and Larry has blood clot problems, but for an evening they were so happy. She told me of the story of the Blue Lady from the Salinas ruins we would be visiting: A 1500's story of a nun known as the Blue Lady who tried to save, help, nurture, the natives of the Salinas area. She never left Spain, but many saw her at the Quarai church which is now in ruins. But, say they saw her there helping the natives against the Spanish ranchers who demanded food and other things from the natives as well as the pressure from the priest. Many natives starved and could not meet the demands. The story of the Blue Lady was saved by Madge Harrah in her publication of the story to a Catholic directory. This is a story of a nun being in two places at the same time by intervening of the angels. The Blue Lady could not be a saint, because there was no proof of miracles. Remember, she never left Spain, but she was making appearances and guidance to the natives at the Quarai settlement of the Salinas Pueblo National Monument near Mountainaire, New Mex.

We also talked about Blind Boone Park, I called Sandy, and she and Madge talked on phone, and sadly we had to leave Madge and Larry about 9PM. On way back to the HIE, I had always wanted to see the big, fancy Sandia Casino (Sandia Pueblo) near Madge's house. Well, Bill and I went there and lost \$3, but was greatly disappointed. I noticed how "unclass" the casino was. It was not that clean looking and reminded me of the lower class casinos in Okla. of those really hooked on gambling. We won't go back to the Ute or Sandia casinos.

Sept. 10 - The next morning, we left the HIE to go to the New Mex. St. Fair, and we were sure surprised! The New Mexico State Fair is 5th largest in country and covers 250 acres (actually right on Route 66, close to downtown Albuquerque). We spent 3 hours going thru 5, count 5, buildings of art and art competition. The Fair has real streets covered by trees. If there is no grass (what grass there is is very thin), the fair staff rakes the dirt. That's normal.

The first building is white adobe with stone flooring, very southwestern. Six rooms of wall to wall paintings, etc. Then, there is a separate building for all Spanish, then a third building for Mative American, and then a fourth building for Afro-American and photography, and that doesn't even count the fifth building for amateur, high school, wood art, etc. We arrived at the Fair at 8:30AM, early to avoid the heat of the day, and left at 11:30AM and missed more Native American

art and then the Zuni dancers. The "art" buildings are very large, so it's amazing how we saw everything, or almost, in 3 hrs.

The Fair is compact. We walked under the race track to enter (saw race horses getting warmed up for the afternoon races), parking no problem in the track infield, and saw not one but two carnivals in the distance. All food service is sort of in one area, with clean surroundings, picnic tables, and everything from barbeque to hot pepper hot dogs. No funnel cakes I saw, but the Pueblo were selling at the Indian Village (huge) the most wonderful looking fry bread with Navajo fry meat pies. We didn't eat, because we were going to the famous Frontier Restaurant in front of the entrance to the New Mex. University where we sat under a photograph of Tony Hillerman. The Frontier is excellent and everyone in town goes there plus all the students. The university is prettiest I have seen. We also went to the Maxwell Museum of Anthropology on campus.

I suggest if ever anyone wants to see an art show(s) go to the New Mex. State Fair which does have a time length longer than Missouri.

In closing, my favorite painting (a blue ribbon winner) was a dinosaur dressed in a business suite with hat and drinking a cup of coffee. However, this painting was unique, but many of the paintings had western themes, scenes of New Mexico, native Americans, etc.....all unique to southwest, others were different. There are thousands of dollars in all the art shows. It's Big Time!

In downtown Albuquerque we went to the Art Museum and Museum of Natural History. We stood in front of the Tony Hillerman portrait at the art museum and then toured the exhibits. At the natural history museum, we went thru the cave, the volcano, and the asteroid hitting earth. I always play with the microscopes at the learning center there. We checked the earthquakes for the day, and went to all the period exhibits. We liked the dinosaur exhibits and of course, the periods of pre-historic history and evolution of life. Everyone should go to the Museum of Natural History. The best. Also, we went to the Pueblo Cultural Center as we always did on other trips. The Center is being changed to more of an office headquarters, so exhibits were sparse, but we enjoyed what exhibits they had permanent. They have not installed a restaurant, expanded the gift shop, and there is more emphasis on attracting visitors.

After Albuquerque, stayed at the Belen HIE, where the town has many vacant buildings and the industry is railroad yards of the Santa Fe Lines plus old railroad cars, passenger cars, etc.

We stopped at a grocery store for some paper towels and beer, when I noticed women with huge paper sacks of green chili peppers standing in line to have the peppers roasted in a big rotating bin basket over a smoker type barbeque lay-out. I didn't understand and didn't ask about the peppers. I just stared.

Sept. 11 - When we left Belen, we were able to enjoy the scenery by waiting for a long freight train to pass. On Hiway 47 we saw metal cut-outs in a pasture: a house, horses, people, and a Walmart truck. Now, we are in cloudy, cool, sprinkles. Also, in area are two howitzer cannons that were buried after the Civil War and now restored and very impressive to visitors. Interesting story of their restoration. These cannons were part of the Confederate invasion of New Mexico.

The green of grass is sort of appearing as we go to the Salinas Pueblo Missions on US 60 which is the same hiway going thru Pie Town, New Mex. The Salinas Monuments are tribute to the Spanish priests who came into area, forced the natives to build rock churches to convert the natives to Catholics. However, due to drought, starvation, and demand for food stocks from the natives, the three ruins: Abo, Quarai and Grand Quivira (which we didn't visit) , are just ruins of what was attempted.

Learned what the playa beaches are: They are sand condensed in a low area, that become lakes when it rains, and the playas go back to being sand. Had a green chili double cheese burger at McDonalds – first time I tried that only in southwest is it served: Still a dollar. The high desert in this area are red dirt grasslands, of sparse grass and native cactus and flowering plants. Cuervo, New Mex. we passed which is typical of towns deserted. Many old towns, current ones, seem to be divided into an appearance of falling-in buildings, shanty houses, deserted adobe homes, and then on one end of a town or the other, a “new” town is forming with Walmarts, big box stores, chain restaurants, and touristy attractions. In Belen, Tucumcari, etc., there seems to be two parts to the town. Of course, those who can't afford to live in the better part of town, live in the bad looking part of town – which shouldn't say Mexicans, but that's the reality.

Tucumcari, is a town with development and a town with sad buildings. The downtown only exists because of the murals painted on many walls. All painted by someone travelling through the area and needed money years ago. We stayed at a new HIE, went to Del's Restaurant for supper, and toured a great dinosaur museum. Mesalands Jr. College has a wonderful 2-year program for those wanting paleontology or archaeology. The same directors of the museum were there, and the fascination of bronze dipped dinosaurs were our favorites.

Sept. 12 - After leaving Tucumcari, we started to listen to Ike hurricane news on talk radio shows and Fox TV news. Our temperature was cloudy, raining sometimes lightly, and about 63 degrees. Signs along hiway: Willard, New Mex., sign on a deserted building offered only: barbeque, hamburger, coffee. Many ranches during our trip were for sale (big ranches, thousands of acres) as smaller ranches for city people.

Only one problem of desert ranch life: Water rights and mineral rights which includes oil wells.

As we entered Texas, Hereford, Tex., there was open range as well as many other places we travelled. The land was changing from the obvious mountains in distance to no more buttes, and flat landscape like Kansas was apparent. A car license read: "Eat Beef." Another sign I noticed near Amarillo, Tex., read: See live rattlesnakes, Enjoy fried rattlesnakes. The Buffalo Chip liquor store had a sign: Last Chance Before Lubbock. In Bushland, Tex., there was a sign that bragged "Original fried pie sold here." And, there was the Happy Trails Horse Motel.

At the Panhandle Plains Museum of Canyon, Tex., I returned to watch the film of the butchering of a buffalo and many uses of the buffalo's body by the plains Indians. This is one of our favorite lengthy museums. Also, Maryjo Bonner said the buffalo stuffed at the entrance of the museum was the one that treed her mother on the plains. The museum is part of the East Texas University. The museum is a major museum about history of oil in Texas and drilling. Then, there are works of art, a pioneer area of original 1860 buildings restored and more info about the great cattle drives. Right after that, the buffalo was preserved forever at the museum.

To the east of Amarillo, Tex., is the Kwahadi Kiva Indian Museum. This Kwahadi culture is where the Boys Scouts of America take their ritual practices and awards. The museum has paintings, a kiva design, and culture of the Pubelo. We met with the director and he knew the story of Mr. Maxwell and the Philpott Boy Scouts area of New Mex.

Oh yes, shop at the Little Sweet Pea store in Fritch, Tex. Think it was an antique store. Also, along the hiway there was a political sign with the politician riding a horse. A great sign of western theme.

Sept. 12 - North of Pampa at 7:15AM still foggy, damp rain. The town of Pampa has three impressive museums we didn't visit: Woody Guthrie home with musical notes in front of museum, "This land is my land...", an airplane museum with planes in front, and a White Tail Museum. Also, along the road are pretty green hills with red dirt and then more oil drilling. Most oil wells we saw during trip were working very hard! A very large hand-made dinosaur was on top of a hill near Hiway 60E. In Canadian, Tex., sign read: Fort Dough Girls making homemade sour dough bread. Canadian, Tex. is an oil town, but very pretty, and the downtown was being revamped by old-fashioned brick streets. Also, along the hiway saw another dinosaur made out of hubcaps, and in Arnett, Tex. saw a business in an old church called "Heavenly Hair Salon." Also, there was a propane gas tank painted like a pink pig. And, in Woodward, Okla. there was a sign for the town: "Home of the Kitchen Sink" Omelet.

In Okla., we went to the Alabaster Caverns State Park, where we met the "Bat Girl." Opal, the bat girl, is so knowledgeable about bats that she out told many cave guides about the characteristics of bats. She even out-talked the directors of some caves in Missouri. She was great and knew all the bats and what they were doing. Some bats even talked back to her as she shone a flashlight on them. The cave is not

a pretty cave, it's a cave for alabaster and a water formed cave, so no stalagmites, etc. It's a walking cave, not very difficult, but with Opal with us we learned all sorts of stories and who developed the cave for tourists. One man did most of the work during 1930's to design steps, walkways, lighting. This is also the story of Freedom, Okla., too.

Sept. 13 - By Saturday, Sept. 13, we were going to Alva, Okla., but remembered a sign outside a B&B in Freedom, "Osage Saddle B&B." The concern about flooding from the hurricane in Okla., caused us to divert to another direction home, by way of Kansas instead of Ponca City. The 10 inches of rain or more really got our attention.

Here is a very unusual sign in Harper, Ks.: "Boycott Corrupt Small Towns." That is interesting to what that means. Got to Wichita, Ks., and stayed just west of the town. Weather is now cool, about 70 degrees, and seems like rain. Called Madge in Albuquerque and told her we were fine and at a nice HIE. We were on our way home.

Sept. 14 - Left Wichita area on US 54 heading toward home, after Bill researched what roads were closed by high water. Can't remember where now, but here are some interesting businesses in Kansas. Near Ft. Scott, "Peaches Barbeque, Old Foulks Antiques, and Aunt Toadies restaurant."

Home by way of 13 south to Clinton for buffet at Golden Corral, and arrival home about 2PM. Took a few days to figure out where I was at. Scruffy is in love with George now who took care of him and Ms. Topsy enjoyed being the vet's office resident welcoming cat!

This is a very rough draft. All the HIEs we stayed at were top quality. No problems during the trip, just traffic in Santa Fe that we weren't used to. Most of the roads we traveled on were two-lane, so we were able to enjoy more of the scenery and attractions.