

A Tucson Travel Log



Ramblings by Eldot: March 6-15, 2013

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Tucson Festival of Books Travel Log *March 6-15, 2013*

March 6, Wednesday *Portland to Corning, California 465.6 miles*

It may not be general knowledge, but among fast food restaurants I prefer Carl's Jr. Good food, good service, fun commercials, and a new breakfast menu featuring fresh Hardee's Hand Made from Scratch biscuits: what better way to launch a 10 day trip into the desert southwest? Accordingly, after acquiring my co-pilot Mike Sullivan and his gear, I made a beeline for the Carl's Jr. in King City. Happily, it was on the way to my sister's house, where I had to drop off something before leaving town.

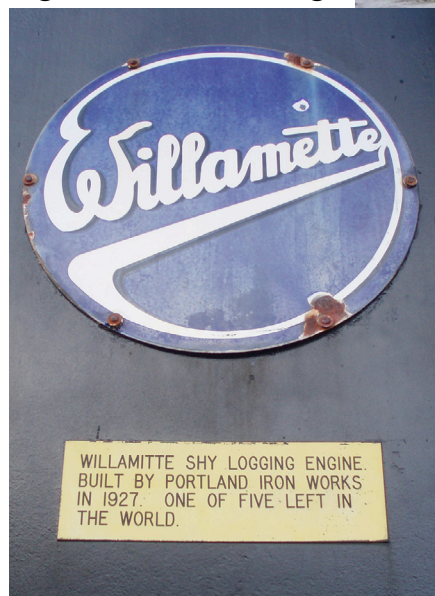
I tell a lie: without a helicopter, one cannot do a beeline anywhere from Mike's apartment.

After feeding face and stopping by Dee's house, we made our way to Interstate 5 via Sherwood. We thought it might save time—it was nearly 9 a.m. already.

It was raining, but not heavily. That soon changed. It rained well into California with varying, sometimes very heavy intensity. In Grants Pass we had lunch, then filled the gas tank at the Medford Costco. We were delighted to discover that it was not snowing on the Siskiyou Pass. The new set of tire chains remains new. A break between storms came north of Mount Shasta, where the first photograph of the trip was taken; the mountain was still in the clouds.



We took a brief side trip to see the Castle Crag. We were having trouble finding a place to get a good view. During



the search we discovered the Railroad Park Resort parking lot. We got several good photos of steam engines and pre-diesel railroad cars, including one with a spectacular snowplow nose.

Mike is a railroad fan from way back, so he was delighted. He got this closeup of an item from home.



He was also able to get this shot of the crags from the south side.



Few pictures were taken during the drive through California. It was raining so heavily that it was all one could do to see the road; exceptions—the California Aqueduct Vista Point, the Indian Rocks overlook. That



part of California was stunningly green.

The teeny spots below the outlook are cattle munching on the green. Above them is the open canal from Shasta Lake; the water is pumped over the hills through huge pipes, presumably to southern California. The sunny patch vanished gradually as we continued southward—the clouds in these snapshots were the leading edge of a storm that reached south to Mexico; it kept us company all the way to Tucson. Sometimes we were ahead of it, but it always caught up.



We settled for a late supper at Denny's in Red Bluff, and arrived at the Corning Best Western Plus after dark. My first night in a motel in *years*; it was tolerable, I suppose. The pillows were too big, the mattress too soft. The desk in the room was nice though, with an outlet for my laptop on the lamp base. I followed my usual regimen and read until midnight. Mike read in bed using his Motorola cell phone. [That unit does *everything*.]

He requires more sleep than I; he drifted off around ten, I think. He is able to sleep with lights on and he can tolerate a substantial amount of background motel noise. I am unable to accommodate feet stomping down the hall, doors opening and closing at random, muffled conversation next door—then there was the mini refrigerator turning on every five minutes. I found a dial inside at last, and turned

it off. That became an automatic first duty at every stop. I may have slept 3 or 4 hours. It sufficed. But a *queen* size bed? Not my thing, but they are the smallest size available, *anywhere*. Four pillows, enough towels to last a ditch digger a week, and a teeny bottle of shampoo—motel conventions are weird.

March 7, Thursday *Corning to San Bernardino 550.5 miles*

The Best Western complimentary breakfast included sausage patties and butter filled egg omelets—a bit excessive, but one indulged anyway. No photos were taken until we stopped for lunch at the Harris Ranch near Fresno, a favorite stop of Mike's. It was quality dining. No other photos were taken on the 7th.



We gassed up at Sacramento, then again at World Oil in San Bernardino, at California prices—shudder: 40+ cents per gallon higher than in Oregon. Mike knew the intricacies involved with pumping gas and operating the automated payment device built into the gas pumps.

We left Interstate 5 north of Los Angeles and drove east on Interstate 210 [the Foothills Freeway], bypassing the worst of the commuter traffic. It was still plenty busy though; it was at the height of the rush hour.

It's a shame that it did not occur to me to record any of the trip to Tucson. Mike and I traded off driving, which made it interesting instead of a task. I'm *sure* it was interesting, but alas—I took no pictures. What a dodo! It was cloudy or raining the whole way, which might explain why. Now I don't remember a thing I saw. Wait! the forest of *giant* windmills at San Geronimo Pass. Over 3,000 of them, and not a single snapshot. Inexcusable. No pictures were taken until we approached Tucson the next day. The photograph mania didn't kick in until we visited the University of Arizona on the morning of the 9th; too bad, really. Instead, attention was given to the portable CD player Mike brought along. Ingenious, it uses the cigarette lighter as a power source, and a cassette tape case as an adapter to the car cassette player. I brought a box of recently acquired CDs that kept us entertained when we were out of classical radio range.

I don't remember much about the San Bernardino Best Western Hospitality Lane motel. The room features were similar: queen bed, lots of pillows, refrigerator, microwave, table and chairs, floor lamps. The noise level was about the same. I took a shower [my regimen is every other evening at ten, unless I have worked up a sweat; Mike is a daily in the morning guy.]

March 8, Friday *San Bernardino to Tucson, 436 miles*

The complimentary breakfast at San Bernardino was “continental” [i.e., cold cereal] so we sought out a Carl's. It was to be an all Carl's day: lunch in Phoenix and supper in Tucson.

For miles we watched a spectacular thunder system develop—it became active as we raced eastward; often it caught up and splattered the windows—then we'd get ahead of it for a few miles. I took a snapshot of the rapidly descending mammatic cloud at Blythe where we filled up with gas.

The storm followed us all the way across Arizona to the hotel in Tucson. Sunset was approaching when we checked into the Best Western Tucson International Airport Hotel and Suites.



The courtyard picture is from the window in our room; very classy—about a third of the area is shown. After unloading, I took a few others, including one of the orange tree in front. No one picks up the oranges! These were the only pictures taken on the 8th



At the desk we sought assistance in getting a printout of the Festival parking map. Chris, the check-in clerk, was very helpful. It so happened that he had a presence at the festival as well. He had prepared a banner to decorate a private Montessori school's booth. We were not able to locate it the next day. We scooted off to yet another Carl's for supper. I indulged in a low-carb burger, the fancy one that substitutes iceberg lettuce for a bun.

The hotel is near the airport, but noise was not a problem at all. The building is at a distance and very well built.



March 9, Saturday *Kitt Peak, Saguaro National Park, 150 miles*

The complementary breakfast was a bit fancier than the one in Corning; the omelets had bits of sweet pepper inside as well as butter patties.

This was to be a very busy day. We began by searching for the booth that I would be using on Sunday. First, we used that map to locate the parking lots. The first choice was closed to all but attendees of a basketball tournament. The second



choice lot was perfect; the route we took to find it was improvised, but once there it made locating the Festival relatively simple.

The University of Arizona campus is extensive—it serves over

30,000 students. The architecture is outstanding and varied. The first building we saw was a facility dedicated to the study of tree rings. One would have expected to see such a thing at OSU; probably an earmark.

It was early, and the festival was just getting underway. It was cold and damp—the aftermath of





the previous night's thunderstorm.

A little farther in we found the mall, and located the Author Solutions booths, a string of tents centrally located in front of the Administration building.

My book was on display: second shelf, second book from the left. I introduced myself to the person in charge, and was shown the booth where I would be signing books.

A list of authors and their hour-long time slots was on one of the tables. Mine is the last on the list, 2 p.m. on Sunday

We spent a little time looking around before departing for the day's tourist destinations. Our purpose was to orient ourselves to the signing area and know what to do and where on the next day.

The weather was not very hospitable for an outdoor event.

SATURDAY, MARCH 9TH			
TIME	AUTHOR	BOOK	PUBLISHER
10:00 - 11:00	Margie Shupert Lynne Washington, Martin	HAM THE ASTROLOGER	Traford Publishing Xibris
11:00 - 12:00	Kenneth Singleton Phil Wallace Payne Ann J. Payne, Ph.D.	Angels And Demons The Mirror The Great Mirror The Power of Emotional Intelligence	Universe Xibris Xibris
12:00 - 1:00	Ann Gregory Altek James Olson Spratt	Alone A Bear Loner A PATH THROUGH	Xibris Xibris
1:00 - 2:00	W. J. Buxton Shirley Farnce A.A. Payton	Winkedough Twinkles Surfer The Little Ones The Sounds of Death	AuthorHouse AuthorHouse Traford Publishing
2:00 - 3:00	SM Chang Phil Wallace Payne Kenneth Singleton	It's My Choice The Short Stories of Phil Wallace Payne Angels And Demons	Traford Publishing Xibris (Universe)
SUNDAY, MARCH 10TH			
TIME	AUTHOR	BOOK	PUBLISHER
11:00 - 12:00	J. Sanderson Gabor Bethlenfalvy	Shadows Present, Shadows Past In Search of an America	(Universe Xibris
12:00 - 1:00	Gary L. Lucas	Code Name: Total Eclipse	Traford Publishing
1:00 - 2:00	W. J. Buxton Rod Hoffer Debbie Boswell	Winkedough Twinkles The Strange Christmas Dream House of Mirrors	AuthorHouse AuthorHouse AuthorHouse
2:00 - 3:00	J. Sanderson Eldot	Shadows Present, Shadows Past Barr's Meadow	(Universe Xibris

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A full day was planned: Kitt Peak observatory in the morning, and Saguaro National Park in the afternoon.

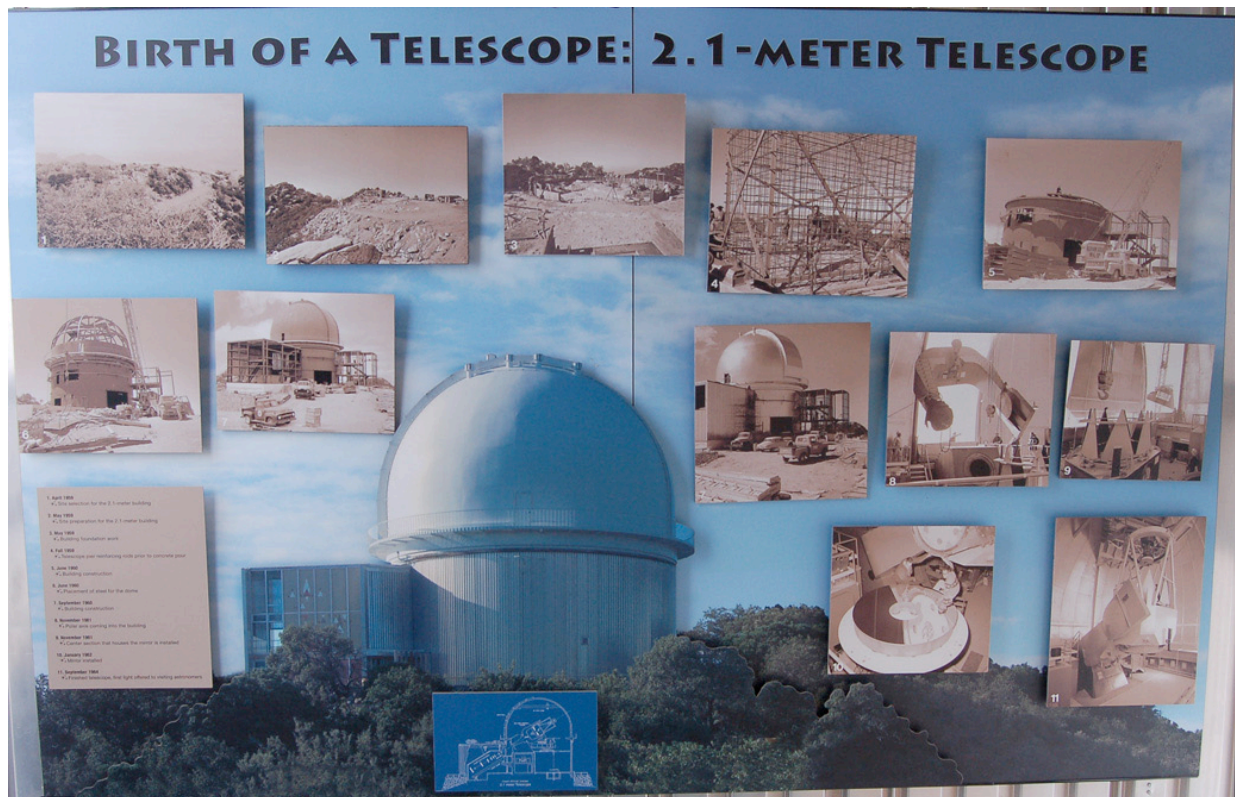
Kitt Peak is a healthy 56 mile drive southwest via State Route 86, toward the Mexican Border. In fact, the Border Patrol had set up an impromptu stop along the way; we were waved through.

The observatory is atop the second highest peak in the Tohono O'Odham Nation. With their consent, it is operated by a consortium of universities and the National Science Foundation.



Unfortunately, the 6880 foot high mountain was in a very wet and icy cloud during our visit. It began to clear as we departed, of course. We were able to get a tour of the 2.1 meter telescope. Six or eight of us hiked up to the facility.

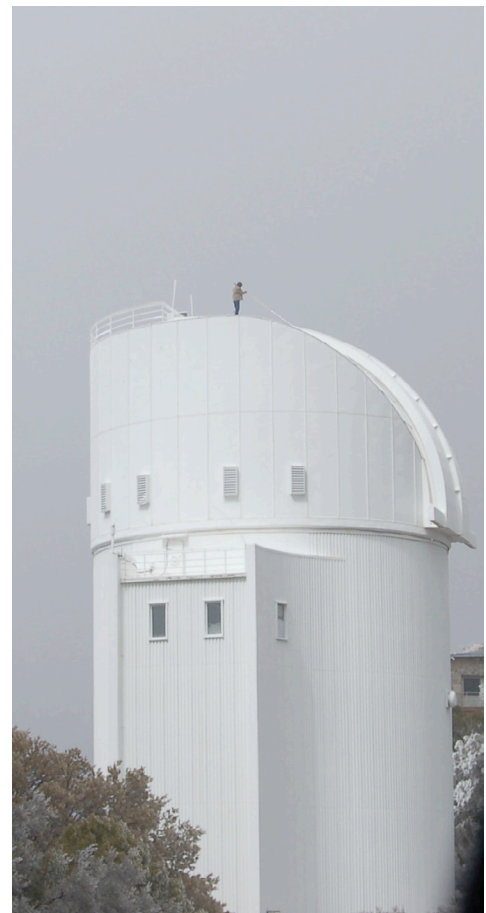




Inside, the stairwell features a huge 4' x 8' display illustrating the history of the building of the telescope. The docent was well informed and able to answer all questions.

Kitt Peak supports the most diverse collection of astronomical observatories anywhere for nighttime optical and infrared astronomy, and daytime study of the Sun. It shares the mountaintop site with the National Solar Observatory. It operates three major nighttime telescopes and hosts the operation of 22 optical telescopes and two radio telescopes, all located along the long mountaintop ridge.

As we drove down after the tour, we spotted a maintenance man scraping ice off one of the telescope roofs with a very long handled scraper. Incredibly, he wore no safety harness. Back on the valley floor, we could see many of the telescopes, free from the cloud at last.



We stopped off at yet another Carl's Jr. in Tucson for lunch, then headed east to Saguaro National Park.



The gate attendant was very helpful: he sold me a senior pass for \$10 that enabled us to enter other national parks free of charge. I was able to use it twice again—at the Petrified Forest, and the Grand Canyon.

The park is in two divisions, both very close to Tucson. We visited the eastern section, twenty miles from the city. Tucson suburbs are visible from several vista points in the park. We were there until sunset; the city lights define its location better than one can see during the day. The city is on flat land, and the only “views” as such are from tall buildings.





The park visitor center has an exhaustive display of desert plants and animals, with explanatory signs.

We drove the loop through the park and stopped occasionally to take pictures and look closely at the various plants.

Above: a big Teddy Bear cholla.

Right: a very big Saguaro cactus.



Below: some areas along the drive thru looked very tidy.



The saguaro has a very interesting skeleton—a bundle of interconnected wooden stalks. This shows why such a tall plant stays intact.

Another type of sign was common—flood advisories. One would have thought the advice superfluous, but evidently not—these signs were everywhere, not just in the national park.

Maybe there's something they weren't telling us...

As the sun went away to Japan we returned to Tucson. We broke form: a Chinese buffet for supper! We settled into the usual evening routine at the hotel; I checked my email, recorded the day's receipts [I get to write some of this off!], and read until midnight.

Not once, I now realize, did we turn on a television set. They picked a Pope and who knows what all during the trip.



March 10, Sunday *Colossal Cave, Pima Air Museum; Tucson to Show Low, 50 and 187 miles*

This was the big day, but I did not need to be at the signing until 1:30 in the afternoon. The idea of hanging around the U of Arizona mall all day did not appeal, so we played tourist in the morning.

First, after feeding on the in-house complimentary omelets and links, we drove east past Saguaro Park to the Colossal Cave National Monument. The elaborate network of caves and vents was carved out by sulfuric acid during one of the region's volcanic episodes.

Making it available to the public was one of many CCC projects during the depression; it's now operated by a private company.

The cave is warm--a constant 70 degrees year around. It is no longer



“live.” Everything is coated with a layer of fine dust.



There are several levels of tours, including “ladder” routes for serious spelunkers. We took the basic beginner’s tour, about an hour long. The altitude is 3500 feet, so climbing back out of the cave was not especially arduous. Still, the tour descended a hundred feet or so, so it was an effort—especially considering that it was 70 degrees. Afterward, the 45 degree air outside was welcome. A bronze statue honoring the CCC crew stands in the outdoor waiting area.

We did not explore the other possible entertainments available at the site. There is a museum, library, and a cattle ranch with tourist features. It was the off season, so all we saw on the ranch was



closed gates. We explored anyway and saw evidence that those flood signs could well serve a purpose. We followed a road to see the picnic area, thinking it might lead to something interesting. After a while I turned around; the road was suited to a jeep not a station wagon.

The ranch parking lot had a fun sign:



We left in a bit of rush; we wanted to see as much of the air museum as possible before we were due at the book signing.



Pima is one of the largest air and space museums in the world, and is non-government funded. More than 300 aircraft and spacecraft are on display, including many of the most historically

significant and technically advanced craft ever made.

The first plane in the hangar is suspended from above—a replica of the Wright brothers Kitty Hawk plane.

We did not have time to take a shuttle bus tour, so we wandered at random for as long as we could. I didn't count how many planes were in the enormous hanger. Many were suspended overhead, maximizing the display space.



Remember the teeny jet that Roger Moore used in the James Bond movie Octopussy? They had one.

Among the outdoor planes was the Douglas DC 6 used by Presidents Kennedy and Johnson.



Every manner of bomber, fighter, and helicopter was assembled neatly in rows, Russian MiGs included. The U-2 spy plane and the B-29 were in the next lot; we

didn't go there—time was running short. Reluctantly, at one o'clock we left for the book signing.

We stopped at a Carl's near the campus for a quick lunch. One of the many capabilities of Mike's magic phone is locating restaurants and providing continuous information about our location. Mike often served as navigator, and it made a huge difference the entire trip. We arrived at the booth half an hour early. Scouting the parking building the day before paid off.



The weather was perfect. Not much breeze, temperature about 65. They put me to work right away. Two women were assigned to assist. Like carnival barkers, they urged people to hurry over and get their free book.

Unfortunately, no planning or preparation was made about



this part of the operation, and most of the books went to housewife types. I turned away a few underage students. One recipient was a scoutmaster, with his Eagle Scout son alongside. We had an interesting conversation about what he was about to read. It intrigued him so much he asked for a second copy to give to his other son.

I gave away all 75 books. It was fun, I have to say. The very last copy went to a boy just turned 18—I think he in particular will benefit from and enjoy it. Twenty minutes or so remained in my time slot, but the books were gone. We made a half hearted attempt to tour the other booths, but after walking all morning, our enthusiasm for seeing book exhibits ran out rather quickly. We decided to depart for the next stayover, the Best Western motel at Show Low, Arizona—187 miles north.

About half an hour on the road we came across the entrance to Biosphere 2, owned and operated by the University of Arizona. Unfortunately, it was after hours. The facility itself is not visible from the highway. It had a nifty road sign, though. Highlights along the way included the El



Capitan Pass, made famous by General Kearney in 1846. The layering strata on the nearby hills was unique and gentle by comparison to what was coming.

As we began to gain altitude, a pair of giant smokestacks appeared.

They were from the copper smelter at Winkelman, Mike figured out after we returned. Most of these things aren't identified onsite. In fact, you have to work at it to locate Winkelman on a map.



The highway continued to gain altitude, passing by the Salt River canyon—gathering tributaries from the Apache Reservation to the east, it was on its way to join Theodore Roosevelt Lake in the Tonto National Forest, northeast of Phoenix.



After passing through Globe,
We stopped to take a snapshot
or two on the way up to the
plateau; the special sign
warning trucks headed down
was amusing.

We continued to gain altitude
all the way to Show Low.

We made good time. The Paint
Pony Lodge in Show Low is
right on the highway; next door was the excellent Licano's Mexican restaurant,



recommended highly by the Best Western check-in clerk. The food was good, but the entrance was very odd. The front door seems to be used only by motel based customers. We had to show ourselves in and explore our way into the place. It was bustling with town customers who use what turned out to be the true main entrance, facing the other direction.

Another surprise was how far up in the air we were: 6400 feet! Notice the tall ponderosa pines and the snow on the ground. It was cold in that room. I turned on the heat at once. It was nice and toasty by the time we returned from supper. Our room was to the left of the stairwell on the ground floor. Fortunately the construction was sound, and the foot traffic above was tolerable once they decided to call it a day. I turned the heater off though. It was an over achiever.

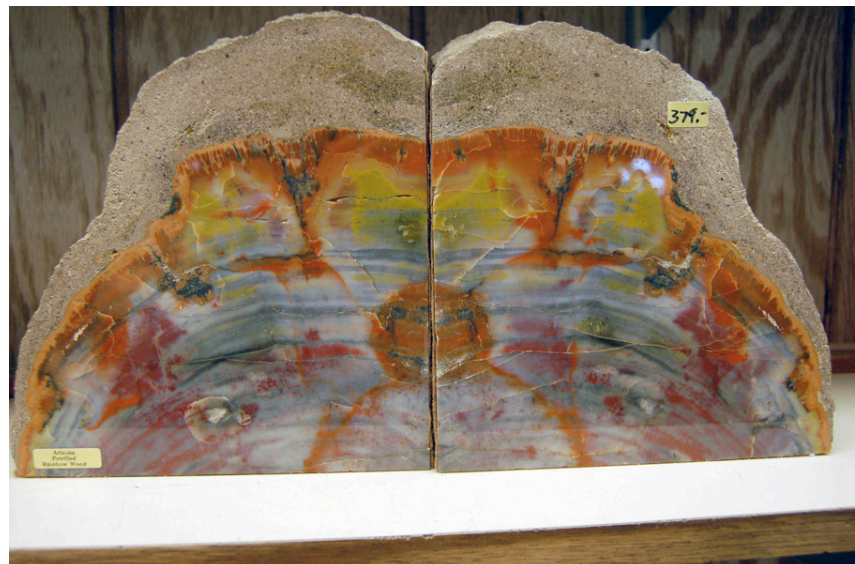
The complimentary breakfast was excellent: scrambled eggs instead of omelets, sausage patties and fruit juice, as well as industrial strength coffee; every place had that. I gave them a good evaluation.



March 11, Monday *Petrified Forest, Painted Desert, Meteor Crater; Show Low to Cameron 255.3 miles*

This was our first full day as tourists, and we packed a lot in. First off was a 79 mile trip to the Petrified Forest National Park and the Painted Desert, the northern part of the park. We travelled northeast on State Highway 61 from Show Low through Apache territory to the southern entrance of the park.

The first “museum,” near the park entrance, was privately owned. Impressive enough—for hundreds of dollars you could buy slices of petrified trees, polished fossils and a wide range of gemstones. The bookends were priced at \$379.





Entrepreneurs have been raiding the area for many years; one Park sign reports that what is left on the ground today is only a reminder of what was there when the area was discovered over a century ago. It is illegal now to take anything from the park, even a tiny fragment.

The area is full of fossil beds as well, though all the visible signs were purloined long ago. This is a polished slab packed with a school of prehistoric shell creatures, I think.





The Park entrance shows the picked clean aspect of the area. The Ravens were on duty nonetheless, scolding regularly.

A walking trail weaves through a selected area. The trees lie in a particular layer of volcanic ash. When the capstone layer breaks, the ash erodes rapidly and the trees are exposed.



The trees were blowdowns in an ancient volcanic blast much like the Mount Saint Helens eruption in 1980—branches were seared away, and the area was buried in ash. An ancient lake formed, and over time minerals replaced the fibers, creating

the petrified wood. As the area lifted eons later, the trees fractured, unable to support their own weight.

Before the park was created, some concerned people built a concrete support for an intact tree they discovered spanning a small wash.



We were under constant surveillance.



The hillside above is covered with tiny fragments that flaked off from a tree that had not crystallized. Instead, it is a hard and brittle beige stone that degrades into inch long flakes.



After the walking tour, we drove north to see the Painted Desert portion of the park. Many viewpoints are provided for photographing the spectacular views.

Erosion causes the hard capstone layer to collapse.

A long log is being exposed in the deep layer of ash.

Below: a reddish layer, seen widely in the Painted Desert.



The outcropping at the left is a piece of the capstone layer. In the next photo, taken from a vantage point a few feet farther to the north, the Blue Mesa formation reveals the several layers of stone and ash that once covered the area.



The petrified trees are just below the wide light grey band near the top.

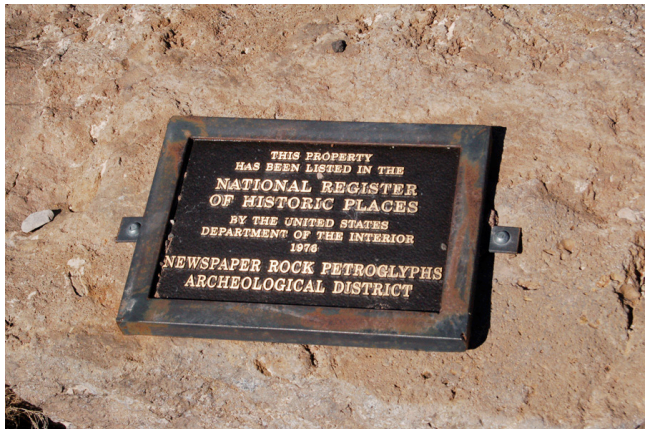


These snapshots only suggest what can be seen. The area is a marvel.





We stopped along the way to look at ancient petroglyphs at Newspaper Rock. They are very tiny compared to the size



of the rock slabs. The rocks are continuing their journey downhill; some of the chunks have rolled away completely. Once on the surface of the rim, these are now 50 feet or more down the slope.





Interstate 40 superimposes itself onto the famed Route 66 at this point. There were a few notices given to mark this, including an abandoned car and a roof sign in Winslow, last stop before the crater. We lunched at a Sonic drive-in and put \$20 into the gas tank at a Circle K, just to be safe—hoping that better gas prices would prevail in



Flagstaff.

A side comment about my least favorite part of the trip: Interstate 40. It runs from southern California through Arizona to New Mexico and wherever. Rough and bumpy beyond belief, it runs right through the Petrified Forest. We had to drive on it all the way to Flagstaff. Signs warning that the road was rough were posted miles after the condition began; other signs telling that the rough part was over lied. The posted speed was 65; it should probably have been 45. Interstate freeway title notwithstanding, it is the most poorly maintained highway I have ever had to use.

Meteor Crater is an impact crater approximately 43 miles east of Flagstaff. A side road, not bumpy at all, leads up to the visitor center on the south rim.



We were too late to see the official presentation and take a guided tour; the facility closes at 5:30, regardless. We had time to take a few snapshots from the rim. The visitor center is being expanded; similar to Colossal Cave, a private company owns and operates the attraction.



Attempts to find the main meteorite have been made at several points; two shafts are visible at the crater bottom.

A fragment of the iron meteorite that created the crater is on display. They now think that the impact destroyed most of the original



object. The site is owned by the descendants of Daniel Barringer, who first suggested it was an impact crater.

From the crater we headed to Flagstaff for gas and supper. A hint of what was coming was alongside the highway: trees.



Highway 89 skirts around the San Francisco Peaks, just North of Flagstaff. The highest is Humphreys Peak, 12,633. [Mt. Hood is 11,249.]

Flagstaff is a mountain town: 6900 feet. Unmelted snow decorated everything. It turned out that Circle K had the best price for gas [that magical phone of Mike's is able to reveal that information, as well as where to find the closest Carl's Jr.



Ironically, It was immediately below Humphreys Peak—you know, the one that upstages Mount Hood. Mike had the foresight to grab this shot from the parking lot. Snow was busily melting everywhere in that town. It was still on the roofs. We had supper and bought a couple of chicken club sandwiches to serve as a sack lunch the next day. That was a good idea, because there are no Carl's Jr. establishments in the Grand Canyon Park, where we knew we would want to have lunch.

The good news was that we were headed for Cameron, which meant getting off Interstate 40.

In Arizona, trees begin to appear as elevation increases. Shrubs begin at around 5000, tall Ponderosa pines at 7000, and Douglas Fir above that. Timberline in Arizona is 11,500 feet; in Oregon it's 6000 feet. Proximity to the equator determines the tree zone.

North and east of the San Francisco Peaks is a ring of relatively recent cinder cones. This one is being quarried.



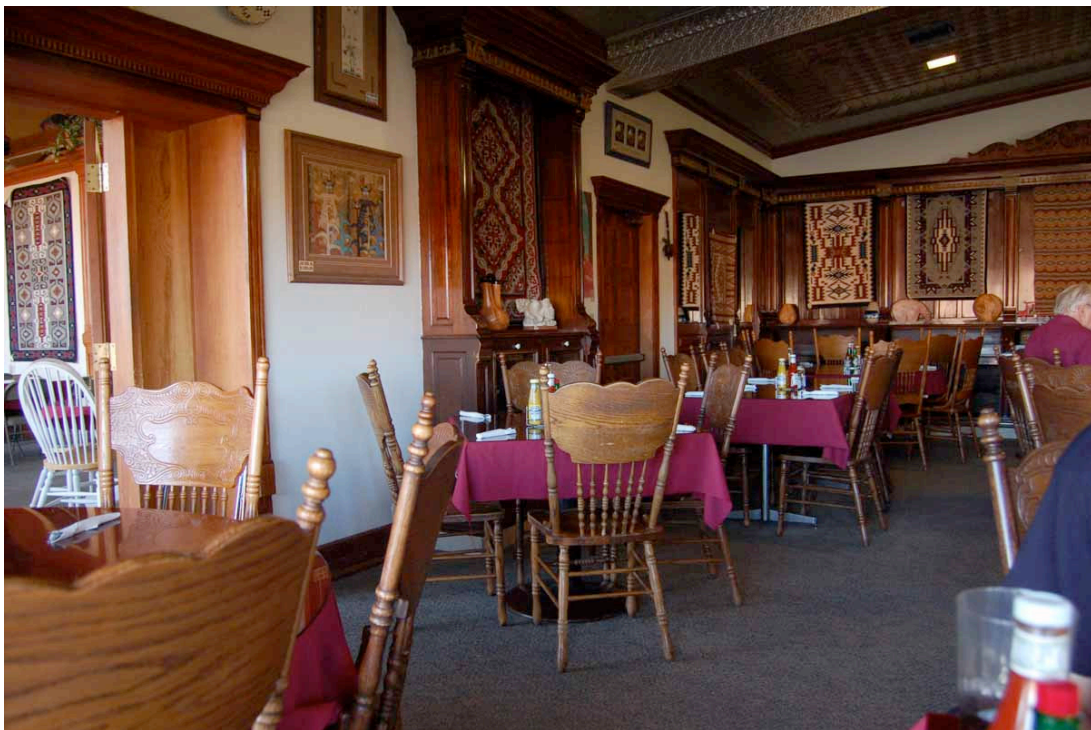
Oddly enough, after driving through miles of forest, we descended to 4200 feet for the night at Cameron. Called the gateway to the Grand Canyon, the title fits: the Little Colorado runs by the parking lot, providing a sneak preview.





Note that there are no trees. We were assigned a very nice room in the Apache wing, facing south. It was one of the best rooms on the trip.

The Trading Post was very busy; a tour bus and several cars were in the parking area. The path to the restaurant led through many rows of trade goods and souvenirs. The restaurant is first class, the décor exceptional. The establishment dates back to 1916.



March 12, Tuesday *Grand Canyon, Cameron to Kingman 226.5 miles*

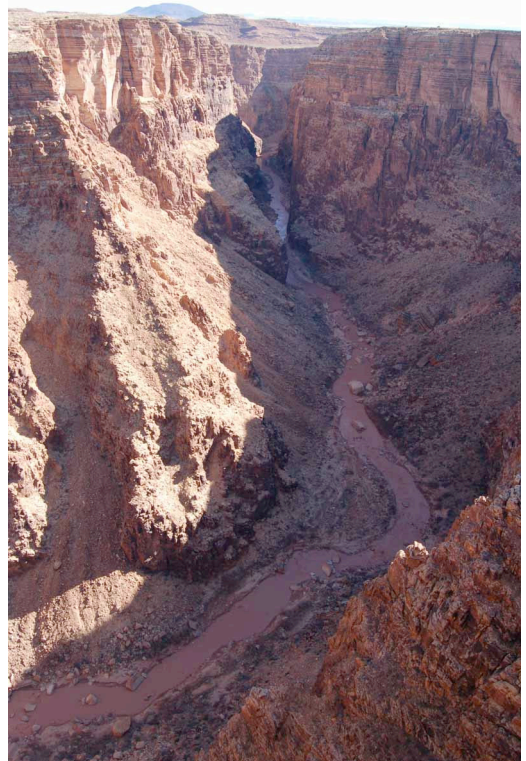
The trading post is 56 miles from the east entrance to Grand Canyon National Park. The elevation increases rapidly—the rim is 7000 feet on the south side, 8000 feet on the north. The trees appear at 5000 and get larger as you drive up.



A mere twenty miles from Cameron, this superb vista shows the amazing progress of the Little Colorado River; the land rises as the river cuts its channel.

The canyon bed of the Colorado river is 2600 feet at the park [using rounded off figures]. Lake Mead is at 1226 feet when full; that means the river drops 1400 feet on its way to the lake.

The Little Colorado River is at 4200 in Cameron. Thus, the river drops 3000 feet at the same time the land on either side raises 3000 feet.





A mere 30 feet from that overlook stood a small assemblage of Navajo and Apache native artisans. Jewelry, pottery, and sundry native products were for sale. The land was in the Navajo reservation, but no signs identified the area. We stopped at a smaller set of stands a few miles farther up.



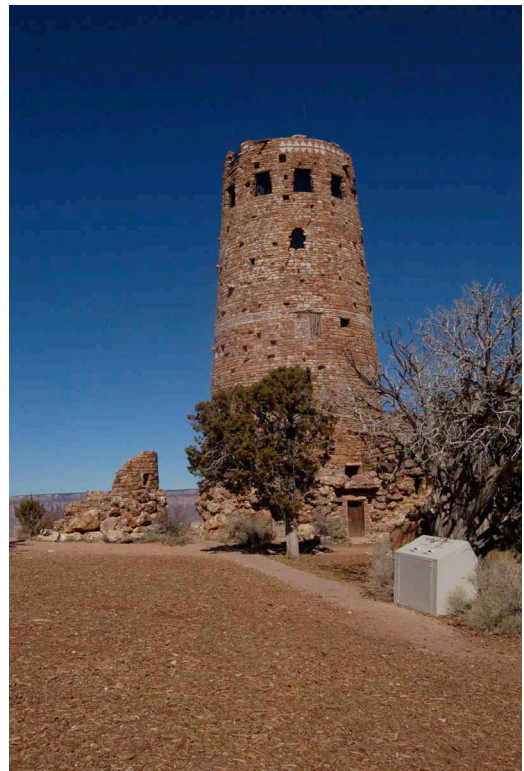
At about 6000 feet, a few miles of the Kaibab National Forest separates the entrance to the park from the Navajo reservation. Kaibab forest is on both sides of the canyon.



The problem at this point in the narrative is too much material to choose from: 3889 pictures, to be precise. I have gone through them all and far too many seem to be essential. I'm unpracticed in travel writing, but I will try to be relevant, at least—there is no way to be complete. From the 366 Grand Canyon pictures I have selected 52. I'll try to reduce that number as I go along.



The east entrance to Grand Canyon National Park starts with what they call the Desert View. We did not go into the visitor center/museum at first. It appeared to be a minor facility, and we were eager to see the view. The chasm is right there, on the other side of the building. Of immediate interest was the Watchtower, an adjacent structure, also on the very edge of the canyon. That's one fact, by the way, that continued to amaze: the rim and edge is uniformly sudden and *right* there—one does not need to scoot close to peek over the edge; there is nothing subtle or gradual about the rim of the Grand Canyon.



It was still relatively early in the day, so shadows made photography a challenge at times. We decided to go into the tower first thing.

Desert View Watchtower is 70 feet high. The four-story structure, completed in 1932, was designed by American architect Mary Colter, an employee of the Fred Harvey Company. She created and designed many other buildings in the Grand Canyon area. The tower is 20 miles east of Grand Canyon Village; The west end is the main developed area of the park.



The ground level space is the Kiva Room, roofed with logs in a basket like weave. The tower was designed to resemble an Ancient Pueblo Peoples' watchtower. The structure is steel and concrete, covered with plaster, stone masonry and wood.



The tower rises as an open shaft lined by circular balconies overlooking the central space. Access from balcony to balcony is provided by small stairways.



The interior is decorated with bold murals by Fred Kabotie; the petroglyph-style decorations are by Fred Greer. Small windows let beams of light into the lower space. The base was intentionally designed to convey the appearance of a ruin, perhaps of an older structure on which the watchtower was later built. Tiny



irregular windows are carefully placed to capture ideal views. The ceiling conceals the structure that supports an observation deck.

The top space is decked over, creating an enclosed observation level with large glazed windows and telescopes. The open observation area on the roof is used for



radio equipment and is now closed to visitors.

Here are some views out of the tower windows. Looking due south, The San



Francisco Peaks.

Looking west, down the canyon...



Looking
north....

Looking east,
the Colorado
River is visible
from this
vantage point.
It is often out of
sight along the
rim.



After the tower tour we dropped in to the Visitor Center. A 3-D model illustrates how the land bulged up, creating the split in the earth's surface that evolved into the canyon. The Ponderosa Pine forests are portrayed as a green skin atop the higher elevations.



Viewpoint vistas occur regularly along the rim, and we stopped at every one.



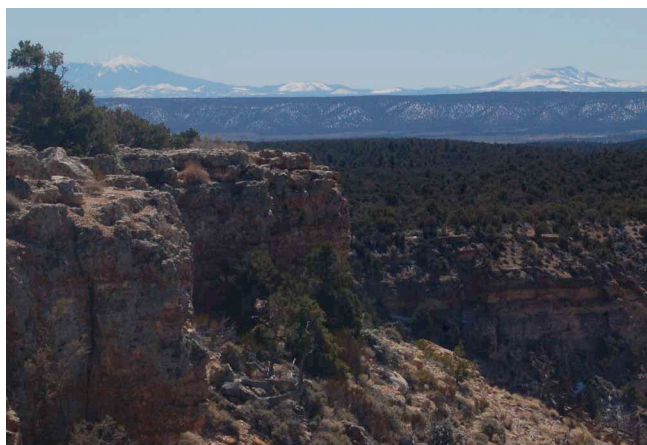
This view looks back toward the east. At the right is the tower. Left, above the canyon rim, tributary splits in the earth can be seen in the distance at a lower elevation; one of these may be the one that begins at Cameron. I zoomed the camera lens to get a closer look:



Looking west from that point, the muddy river can be seen at the lower right.



Looking south, the San Francisco Peaks--

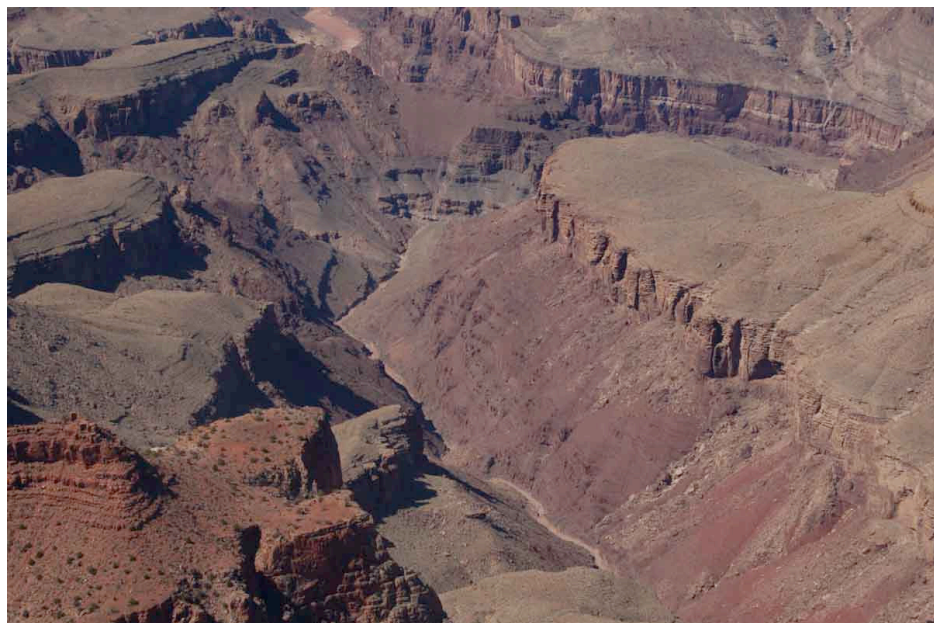


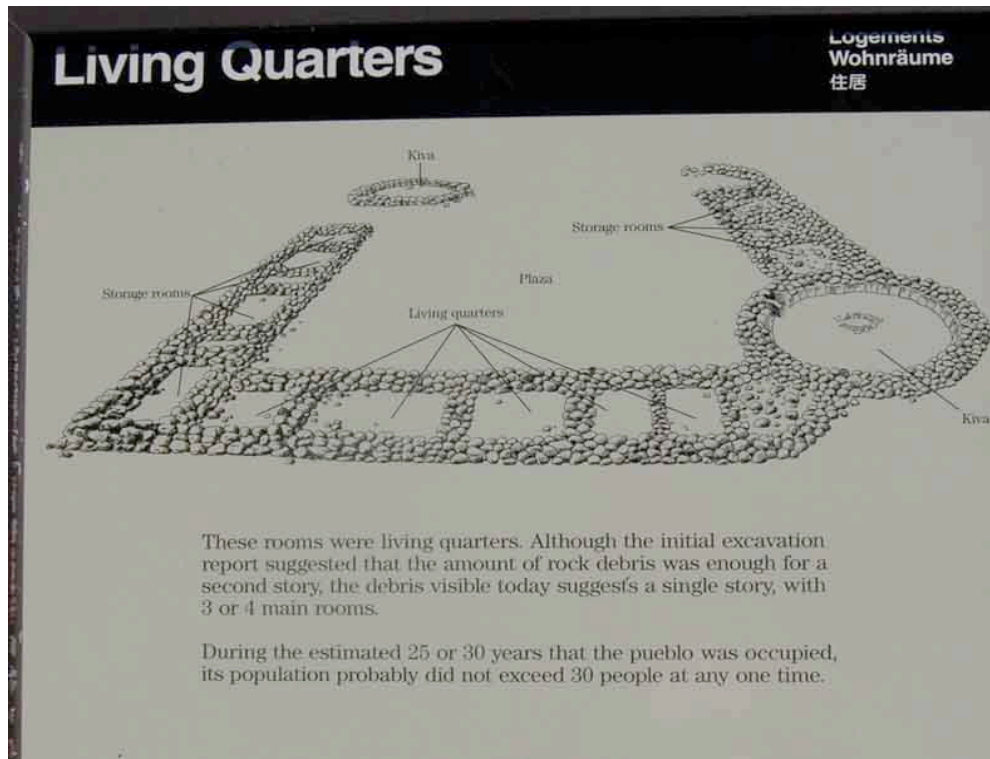


Midway, the
reds begin to
dominate the
view.

Pipe Creek joins
the main river...

Next along the
route was an
ancient Anasazi
ruin, a hundred
yards or so
south of the rim.





A paved walkway weaves around and through the site.

The large Kiva foundation is intact. This was an enclosed lodge structure. The firepit ring and charred stubs of three support posts are still in place

Mud masonry still holds the foundation stones. These rooms were entered from a hole in the roof. The inhabitants used ladders to access the top and to enter the



rooms below. This provided security as well as climate control.

We stopped to eat our chicken sandwiches at this point. A cluster of metal picnic tables was located across the ruins parking area. To the side was an out of place yellow and red object.



Generally, the park has done a good job of concealing the fact that it has a very sophisticated water system.

This may have been near the highest elevation on the south rim. A considerable amount of snow remained where the sun is unable to reach.

We continued the drive east through the ponderosa pines. Taking snapshots from inside the car is risky.

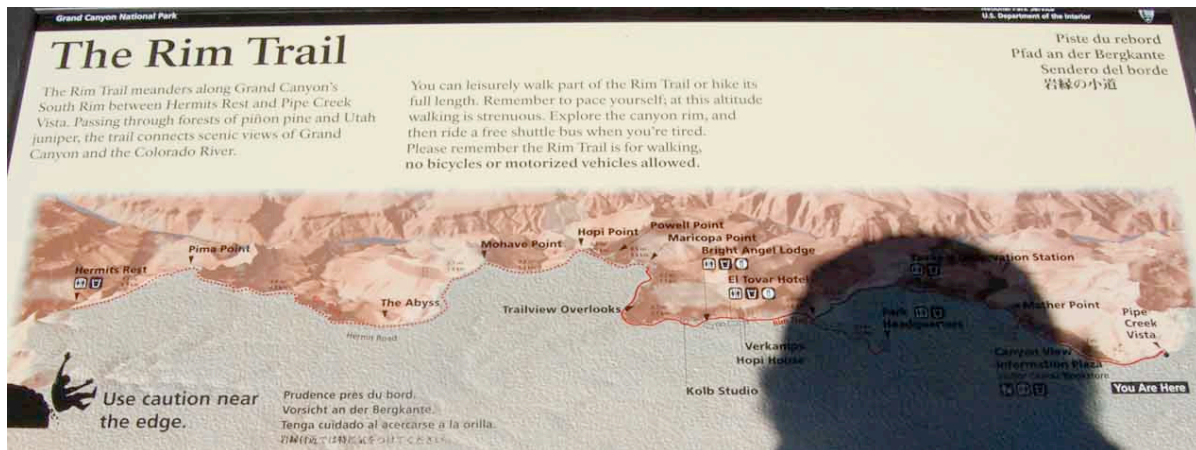
Second try in a shadow was better. The road went several miles before the next vista—but that incredible canyon is only feet away on the right.



The next stop along the rim provided a different perspective looking east.

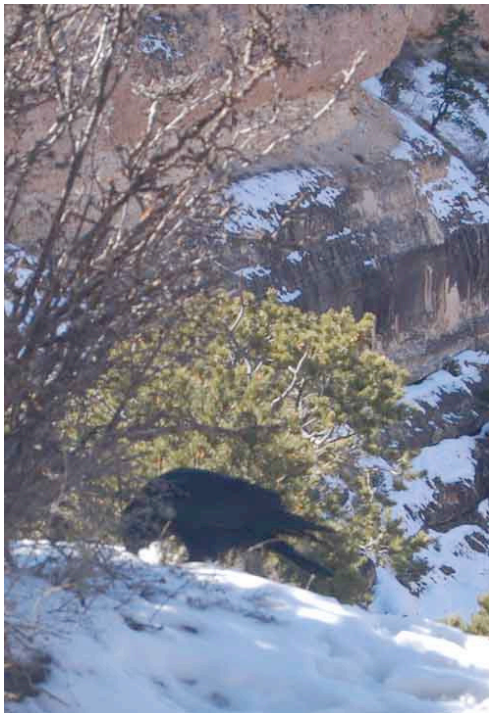
The peak at the right is called Vishnu's Temple. It is a ridge remnant well inside the canyon.





All along the rim explanatory plaques are positioned to assist viewers. Unfortunately, the angle of the sun made it impossible to photograph this one successfully. The final stop on the rim tour is in the shadow.

A zoomed shot of Vishnu's Temple; it was after the peak of the day as well, and the sun had a bleaching effect.



A raven dining on the canyon rim. It was very vocal—boasting, I think.

We approached the western end of the park in the late afternoon. The angle of the sun had improved visibility. This shot is looking north.

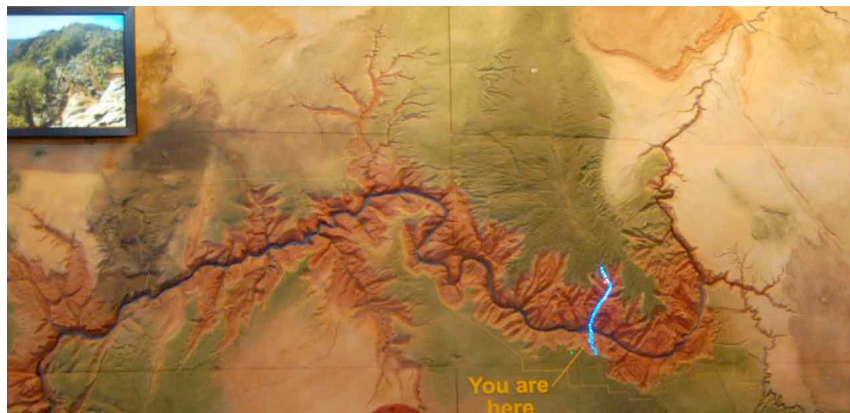


Next stop: the main visitor's center, located near the west entrance to the park.



Inside, a giant wall locator map; the blue line is a trail route down and across the canyon. Signs at the trailhead give dire warnings about attempting a hike.

The area is so vast it is hard to grasp. The part of the rim that we toured is only 25 miles: from the “You are here” point to that gash at the right. That is the Little Colorado River. To the



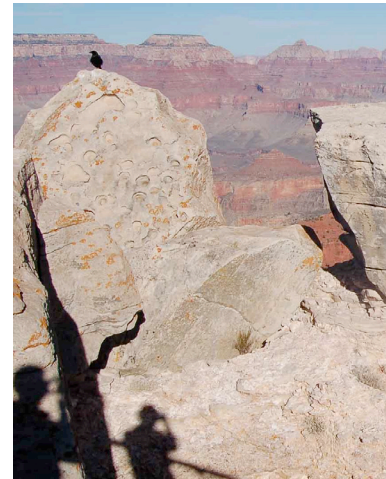
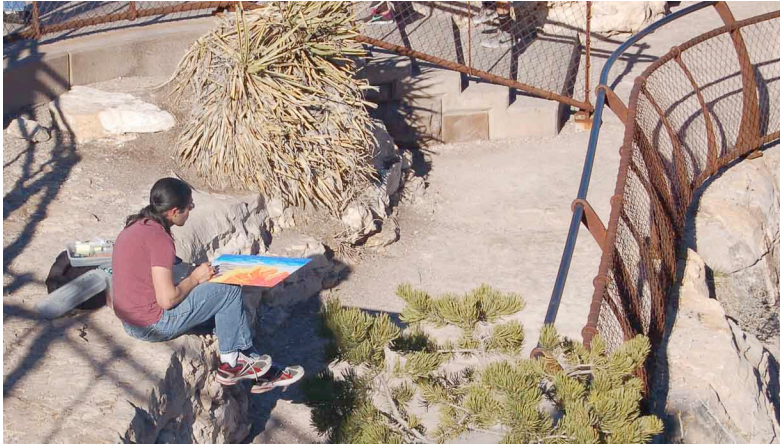
left of “You are here” there is no road available to the general tourist—only the rim trail continues onward. A special guided tour shuttle goes another 8 miles west.

Right: one of the classy items on the visitor center grounds.



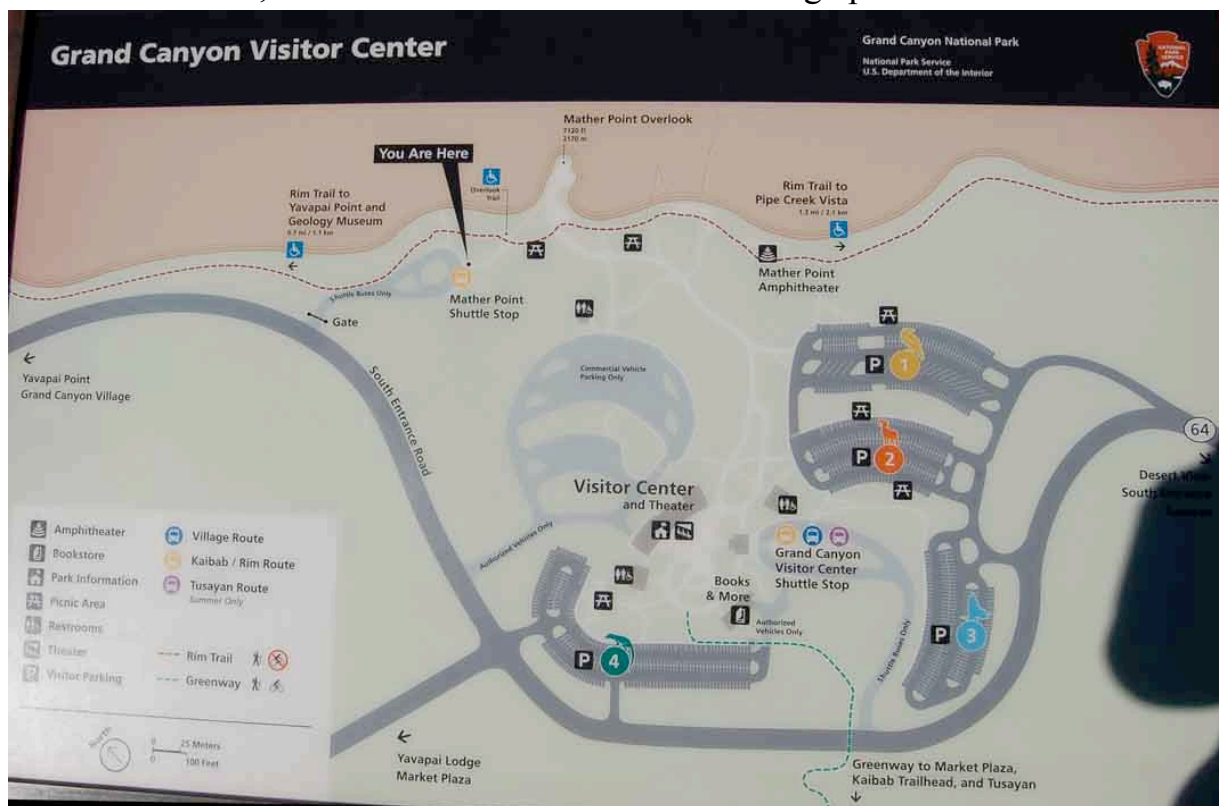
The major promontory at this juncture is Mather Point, a short hike from the Visitor Center.





A raven stood guard on the tilted rock about 50 feet beyond the handrail. It may have been posing.

Mike did not venture out to Mather Point; his knees had had enough for the day. I was tired as well, but determined to see the last vantage point. About 50 feet west



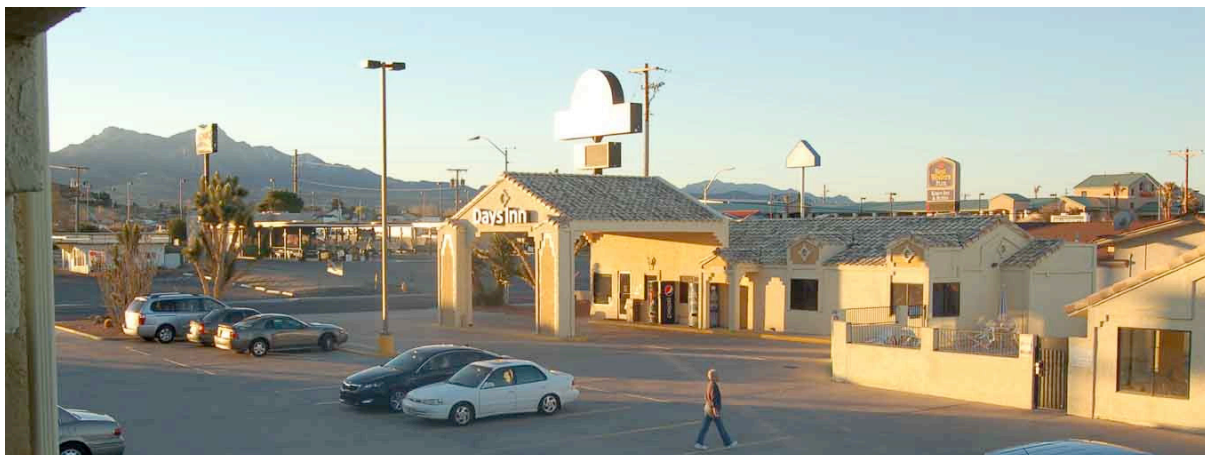
of Mather I was tiring fast, and paused to reconsider. A signpost gave me the reason I needed to stop. It revealed that the last vantage point was *miles* farther, along the rim trail. Too far, says I; I turned south and headed for the parking lot where Mike waited patiently. Little did I suspect how important this sign was; if only I had looked at the lower right hand corner. It showed exactly where parking

lot 3 was. What is not apparent is the topography. Parking lot 3 is not visible from where the walkway from Mather point and the visitor center ends at the street, at parking lot 2. I knew I needed 3, because I had seen the 3 sign when I left Mike at the car. But there was no 3 sign to be seen. So I toured every row of lot 1 and 2, *three* times. Really tired out, I went back to the visitor center and tried to call Mike on his cell phone—his message service answered. [cellphone battery was dead and he had shut it off.] I took a last picture on the way back to the curbside by lot 2, and sat on a 10 inch high block of sandstone to rest and catch my breath. [7000 feet up, remember!]



Lots of people walked by, smiled at the old man in the red hat sitting on the edge of the sidewalk, and walked on. After resting a while I searched the lots *again*—again, no Volvo 960. I returned to my sandstone perch hoping that eventually Mike would drive by; an hour had passed. At last, Mike walked up. Naturally, he couldn't move the car in case I might show up and discover it missing. We had both been paying a price for my failure to look at that sign. As we walked past the row of trees that bordered lot 2, lot 3 popped into view. I felt like the total dummy I was.

Boyohboy was I glad to have that sorted out. I took the wheel and we headed for Kingman. The navigator led us directly toward the Days Inn motel.



As a motel, the Days Inn was friendly enough, but less than perfect; we were put on the second floor. The good thing about that is you avoid hearing feet overhead in the night. The bad thing is you get to climb stairs.

Since one does not dare leave anything in the car, that means at least two, probably three trips up and down—on super tired feet. The



walkway or ramp leading to the rooms was wood construction instead of concrete, so it had an annoying drum like acoustic that reverberated in the adjacent rooms as people walked by, pulling their roller-wheel luggage behind. The plywood top was covered with rolled asphalt roofing, adding a crackle sound to the traffic. Room 214 was halfway down, past a curious dip in the walkway. It looks nice in the photo.

We had splurged for supper. It was late and we were *so* hungry—after leaving the canyon, we stopped at the first sign of civilization: Tusayan. We grabbed at the first opportunity: the famed Yipee-El-O Steak House. It was perfect for food; the music... less so. The horn blaring Country & Western on the veranda gave fair warning, but we needed **food**. The cold chicken sandwiches were a long time ago.

March 13, Wednesday *Kingman to Hoover Dam, Las Vegas and Tonopah, 318.9 miles*

The day started earlier than usual: a tour bus in the parking lot revved up at 6:30 sharp, and it kept running for as long as it took us to get ready to leave. Why do they waste all that diesel? Covered by the tour fees, I suppose. We declined the “continental” breakfast—though I did have coffee, and I snagged a couple of apples. We went to the Carl’s, which did *not* have the Hardee biscuit menu items. Breakfast burger for me—I dislike their breakfast taco or burrito or whatever it is. Onward, men: next stop, **Hoover Dam**.

I have selected 57 photos out of the 628 taken of this part of the trip. I was able to cull 11 out of the canyon group; maybe I can do better with this segment. The

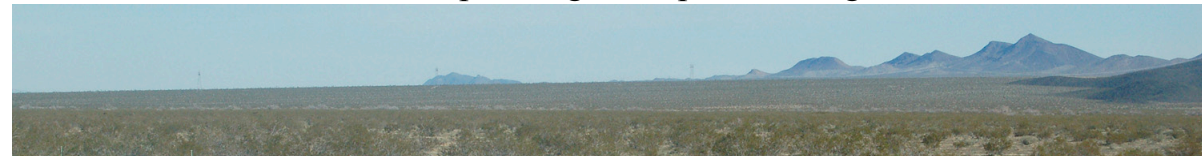
drive from Kingman to Hoover Dam is similar to the other desert stretches in Arizona in that another mountain range always pops up. The fun part is that they



are so different from one another. The first one of note had a mining operation of some kind going.



The next one had curious bumps along the top of the ridge.



This one was gentle and graceful. Another had cinder cones; the last one is



is



across the Nevada state line below the canyon that holds Hoover Dam.



We got a glimpse of the Colorado River below the dam from a vista point turnout above the freeway; look closely at the right side, not quite halfway down. A nifty purple flower decorated the hillside at the outlook.



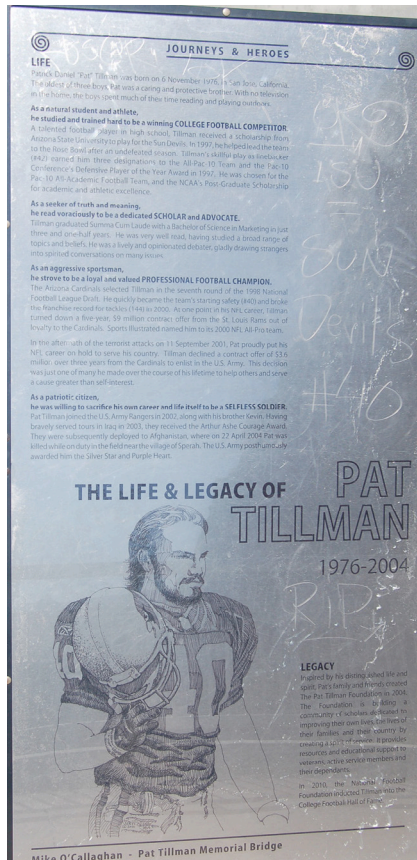
The road cuts along there were interesting; rolling waves of volcanic ash. Over the brow appeared the beginning of the Hoover Dam complex. The new bridge is at the left. The red ridge is on the Arizona side.



The dam isn't visible while driving across the bridge. A turnoff onto the old highway leads to the dam.



The bridge is a recent addition. Built primarily for security reasons after 9/11, the government wanted control of any traffic on or across the dam. The old highway was cut off on the Arizona side and now dead ends in a vista viewpoint. All traffic to and from the dam is now from the Nevada side; it can be closed off at any time. This creates a tourist bonanza. The first thing to do is walk across the special pedestrian lane on the new bridge. A ramp ascends from the parking lot in a carefully graded switchback. The architecture and design of the new facility is first rate.



With one exception: the black on silver explanatory signs; there are dozens of these arranged creatively between the top of the ramp and the bridge crossing. You end up having to photograph your reflection or fight the glare.



The Nevada entrance to the walkway is at the end of the curve in the sidewalk. At that point you can look down the canyon.

The walkway runs alongside the freeway on the dam side only. It dead-ends on the Arizona side, so you have to walk back again.

Left: Mike stands astride the state line.

Right: apex of the bridge;





This is what one sees from the Nevada end of the walking bridge. The old highway across the dam has been reconfigured slightly to serve the new tourist purpose. It includes the new bridge parking area, the new visitor center parking structure, and, like the walking bridge, it dead ends on the Arizona side. This means you have to drive across both ways. No one has to hurry, though one is not supposed to stop anywhere on the dam. A police force is on duty at all times.



From the Arizona side of the walking bridge, one sees the massive visitor's parking structure, and at the far right, above the dam, the Nevada spillway. At present, that is only visible from two places, both on the Arizona side.

Below: From the Arizona side of the walking bridge looking across to Nevada.



Left: The new Arizona welcome sign near the end of the bridge.



Left: the new Nevada welcome sign at the Nevada end of the bridge. Right: driving under the bridge enroute to the visitor's center.

The entrance ramp to the parking facility features a giant bronze sculpture of a high scaler rappelling down a rock face. There is an abundance of stunning sculptures scattered throughout the place. Below: the entrance stairway and escalator down to the Visitor Center is at the other end of the parking facility. A creative awning shields the entrance.



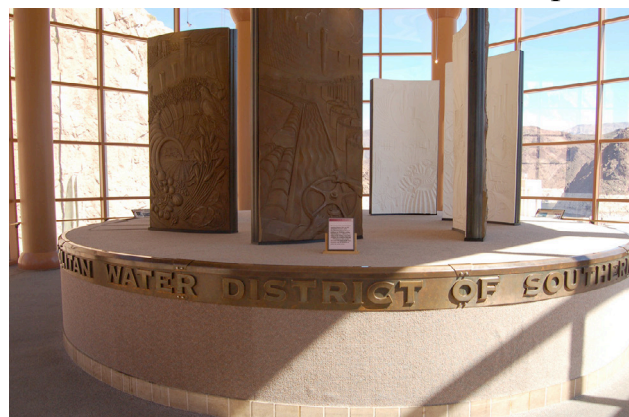
The first thing inside is a huge ticket purchasing center. Tours are all the rage, it seems. We did not share that enthusiasm. Walking miles through the guts of Hoover Dam did not appeal. Our feet were still recuperating from days of walking through caves, along desert park walkways and along canyon rims. Besides, the altitude of these things has a cost. I was always huffing and puffing and stopping to catch my breath. My years of sitting on a 6000 foot peak for the Forest Service were over 50 years ago. I have since been at sea level, where there is a lot more oxygen. So we skipped all the money spending tour opportunities and headed for the free exhibits. First was an impressive life size painted sculpture of two workmen installing an enormous steel or iron object—presumably something to do with generating electricity. I didn't read the blurb.



Nearby a scale model of the dam under construction gave one a good idea of how much concrete had been poured to plug the canyon.



Below: sculptured panels arranged to suggest turbine blades perch on a platform that overlooks the ceremonial dedication plaza.





These bronze masterpieces reflect the 1930s style common in government public art of that time



The figure on the west side looked remarkably like George C. Scott; the arm muscles and the waistline amaze.

I think he looks
better from a
distance; still,
for being past 70,
he's holding up
nicely.



The next adventure was a walk across the dam. Even though March is early in the season, there were still a lot of people about. I would not like to be a summertime visitor. But getting a good vantage point to look and take pictures was never a problem. The water level was low. The mineral content of the water is certainly revealed.

The white deposit is uniform around the lake.



A clock is mounted in the front intake tower on each side of the lake. It so happens that Arizona does not observe daylight savings time, so both clocks read the same. The Arizona clock is set for Mountain Standard Time. We took about 10 minutes to walk between clocks.





The Arizona spillway empties east of the dam walkway. This observation point makes it easy to see how it is used. When the water level in the lake reaches this point, the water spills over this set of hinged flaps. They can be raised up a few feet if the flow is too much for the tunnel to handle. The tunnel runs through the rock to an opening below the dam. A similar spillway is on the Nevada side, but farther up, away from the dam.

The tunnel opening is visible from the other side of the dam road. It can handle a *lot* of water. The handrail above the opening indicates how big it is. We returned to Nevada on the face side sidewalk.





The view across the dam to the visitor center; the strata looks recently exposed. They must have had to clear this when building the power generating buildings immediately below. The tunnel at the lower left is for maintenance vehicles.



Polished brass doors provide access for tours. Restroom doors, also brass, are smaller; the women's room is in Arizona, the men's in Nevada; must have been a toss of the coin to decide that one.

This is one exhibit hall we did not stop to visit. We had walked across the bridge and the dam, and were tired and



hungry. We returned to the other side of the road to check out the restaurant in the parking facility. It did not look inviting. We decided to return to the car, do the drive across, then speed away to Boulder City for lunch. Mike took the wheel.





Left: The original welcome to Arizona sign. The road now leads up to parking areas at three elevations.

Right: at the top level, a bunker made in WW II to protect the dam. It is 25 feet long and has 6 gun ports; constructed of steel and concrete, it's covered with indigenous rock as camouflage. Abandoned for over 40 years, it has been "reassigned" since the attacks on 9/11.



Below is a view of the back of the dam; the Nevada spillway is at the right, the new bridge at the left.



As we drove back to the Nevada side, we passed a couple of gendarmes. They were on a mission of some kind—no idea what it was about.



A parting shot of the stairway we had climbed to get to the car.



Next a shot taken under the bridge as we departed.





Left: the Old Nevada Welcome sign appears just before the new freeway entrance.

On to Boulder City. Alas, they had no Carl's Jr. We settled for a Burger King; a tribute to longhorn sheep occupied the street corner. We didn't stop to read the blurb.

Special overpasses are built over the freeway to replace their natural game trails.



Our next shot was of Lake Mead; one



branch extends toward Las Vegas.

A tourist train of some kind had

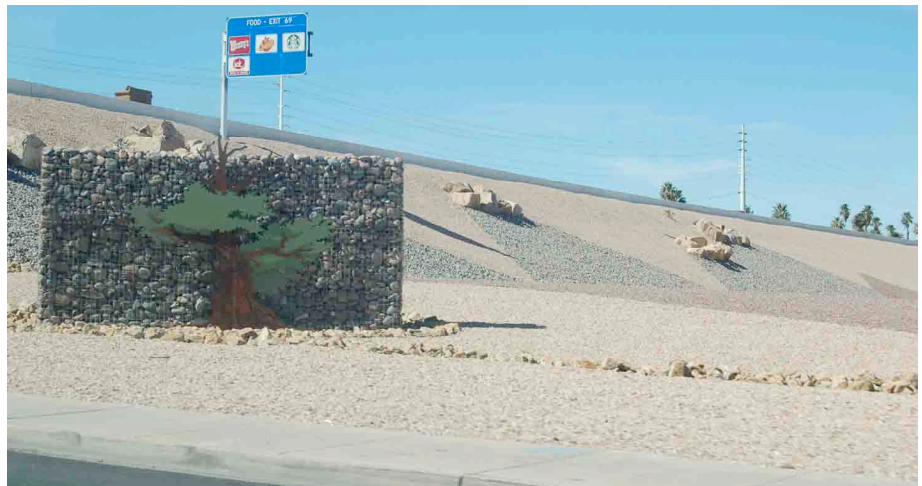


stopped; presumably, the guide was describing something about the area; over the next rise the city appeared.

An admirable feature in both Arizona and Nevada was the care given to decorating the overpasses and landscaping freeway entrances and exits.



A cage full of rocks, a steel sculpture affixed to the face—this way they don't have to use valuable water on plants.



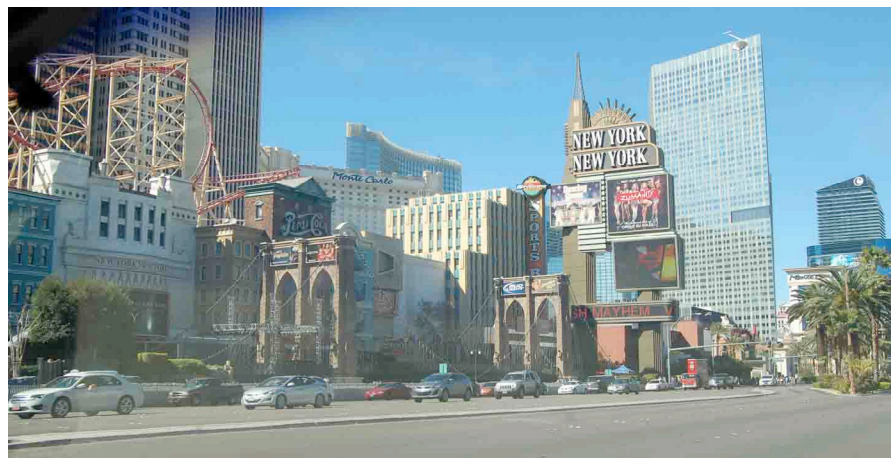
Next came the drive thru. We did not stop; I snapped pictures frantically along an improvised route—Mike had been here before, so he knew roughly where to go.

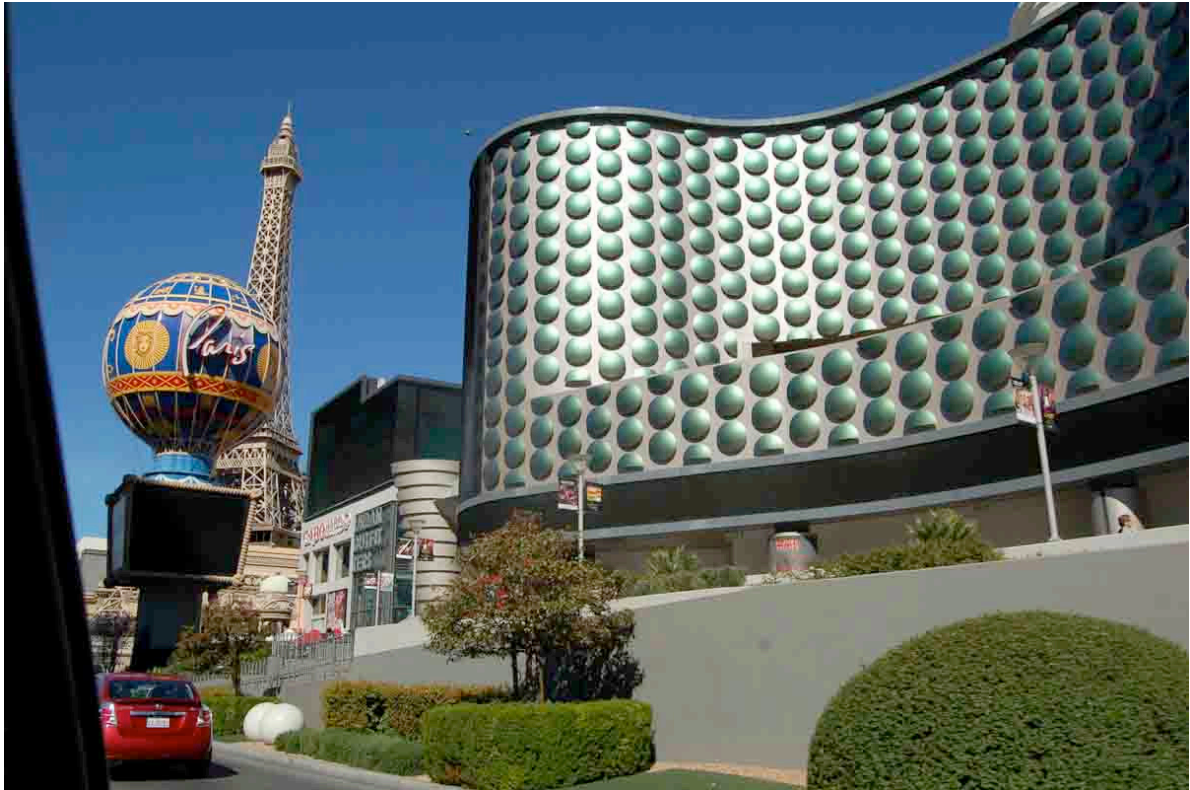
At this intersection it looked as if every casino/hotel wanted to be on the same block; the city is



surrounded by miles of flat desert. Go figure...

Replicas everywhere; the Brooklyn Bridge, the Eiffel tower, Statue of Liberty, a cluster of buildings entitled Paris.





There are at least two walking bridges; odd vehicles like this black whatever it is...



This bridge seems to lead to Caesar's Palace. It was mid-day, so crowds were light.





Some casinos were so close to the street that it was impossible to get a good photo. I suppose there are good ones of The Flamingo elsewhere if anyone has a need.

I did no post trip research on this part of the trip, so none of this commentary is informed.

Below: this whimsical oasis is called Señor Frog's. I suppose it is a restaurant. It has a tall ship's masts without the ship part.





It's across the street from the enormous Wynn Hotel casinos.

A huge inverted suspended oval dish appeared at the left. No idea what it is—no

sign is visible from the street. One wonders how it survives the desert wind.

The Stratosphere Tower: a restaurant?

A modern double decker bus cruised by...





Toward the older section of the city, the wedding chapels began to appear, as well as their stretch limousines.

Much of the original city has been demolished, but a few of the original neon signs are still in place.

The casinos that went with these are no longer standing—nearby, at least.



I almost forgot to include these splashes of commercial extravagance.



Enroute to the freeway, a city park of sorts, designed for *residents*:



Onward men, to Tonopah.



As soon as we hit the freeway the parade of mountain ranges started up again. A



series of striped ones came first.



There are scads of these, all different and interesting. They lose clarity being shrunk in size like this; seeing them directly out of the window is a lot more interesting. Suffice it to say that the Nevada mountains are different from the Arizona ones except that they are arranged just as nicely for the traveller.

Several military installations appear along this route, including the desert training facilities for the Navy and Marines.



A marker for the atomic bomb test site is on the highway shoulder.

Here's the thing to consider at this point: between Las Vegas and Tonopah, I took 276 pictures. About 225 of these are of rock and mountain formations, all very interesting individually—but as a group in this narrative? I won't do that to you. What I will do is pick a few, say 3 or so, between highlights [in order of appearance: Death Valley Junction, Beatty, Goldfield, and Tonopah.] Of necessity, several wonderful photos will be left behind. Plans to offer a special appendix on these rock formations are not pending at this time.

So to begin, this oddball formation.



The window gets in the way some, but...
the next one looks chunky and disagreeable.



This one had a remarkable smooth apron under the peaks; no rocks or shrubs.



The next pause along the way was at a wide spot in the road that served a number of “purposes.” The signs were emplaced by a business called Bunny Ranch. Presumably one finds the entrance in the flat

roof buildings behind.

Personally, I found the vertical layers on the mountains more interesting than the proffered Hot Sauce, Pictures and Souvenirs. Looking back toward Las Vegas: Daddy D’s Rocket Diner station and the “Area 51” alien travel center. Open year round, it says. That news removed any worry we might have felt at the time.



On the other side of the highway a fort replica served as a gas station and gift shop.



Who knows where the road behind it led; it was lined with almond trees. A sign on the way out of this oasis announced news about the upcoming junction: you can change course to Death Valley, if you want. We didn’t.

A set of natural sand dunes flashed by—the only ones on the trip. I recall that a



small set like this moves from east to west and back again between Reno and Ely. I don't know if this one migrates.

This set of hills showed a progression of colors—grey in the west, reds, then



browns in the east. Observe the jumble of colors and layers in the next set of hills: how did they do that?



As we approached Beatty, this extraordinary white outcrop appeared. Reduced like this it isn't as striking as it was out of the car window. From this point on, evidence of mining starts to appear. Much of the activity is or was back up a canyon; few active operations are visible from the highway.



The greater Beatty metropolitan area and its brave leafless willow trees lie a comfortable distance from a set of mountains unlike most we drove past; these are



jumbled, disorganized. On the other side of the highway, the business district is right up under some peaks with real character. If they aren't mining up there, it looks like they should be.

At first I thought the name of the town was Stagecoach, since that appears so boldly on a couple of signs.

We did not stop to pick up any Really Good Fresh Jerky. I can't give a good defense for why not, either. I think the last time I had jerky of any kind was in high school—on a scout trip into the Cascades,



actually. Yeah, I know, I don't know what I'm missing. Next stop, Goldfield—after a few more mountain ranges, o' course.



This was just out of Beatty, actually. Maybe they're cottonwoods instead of willows. Spring is still a way off for both Arizona and Nevada, from what we could see. Some of the Saguaro park plants were showing signs of waking up, but most everything else was capital D dormant. High altitude must affect that. In Oregon, daffodils had been in full bloom for more than a week.

The next series of mountains were lyrical in a way; graceful slopes, pastel hues.



Colors in the hills below hint at what's coming: mining country.



Goldfield was a boomtown named for what they found in the hills nearby. The town is restoring some of the buildings that remain from those times, 1903. It was late afternoon when we drove through. We didn't explore because we wanted to reach Tonopah before dark. The colored rock in the base of the commemorative sign is an indication of what is found in the hills. We saw no people or traffic; 268 people live



there now, and there are nine civic organizations on the signboard. Everyone must have had the day off. Maybe they were busy digging. It's still an active mining area.

Only the stone buildings remain from the boom days; much of the town burned in 1923. At its height,



the population reached 20,000, making it the largest city in the state.



Not far out of Goldfield the sun broke through the high overcast and made the hills turn very gold. No sign of diggings though.



Between Goldfield and Tonopah, evidence of mining past and present increased. Much of it was distant, and many photos don't show it very well.

But there were some good ones. In the hill below, clear signs that digging had been done there in the past.





In this shot, evidence of fresh digging



As we neared Tonopah, more activity was apparent; roads snaked everywhere.



The sun was going down as we entered town. A prosperous casino is at the south end of town.

Tonopah sits at 6047 feet, so it is a mountain town, like Flagstaff; no snow tho.



It's a scruffy working town with much of its heritage in plain sight. The hills on both sides of town have been or are being mined today.



Many buildings are skillfully made, using raw material from the local area:



Small mining ventures continue to provide income for local miners; the town's location halfway between Reno and Las Vegas makes it an ideal stopover and rest spot. The Tonopah Station has slots and the Banc Club also offers some gaming. Above: mine tailings seen from the back of the motel.



These snapshots were taken the next morning just after we filled up at the



Giggle Springs gas station, down the street from the Mizpah Hotel. Colorful names abound. On the way out of town, a place we did not stop: The Clown Motel. The bikers were not in town.

The town relies on the nearby Tonopah Test Range as its main source of employment. The military has used the

range and surrounding areas as a nuclear test site, a bombing range, and a base of operations for the development of the F-117 Nighthawk, the first stealth fighter. The fleet of 117s is now mothballed at the Tonopah range.





The town bandstand has a bit of problem—it sits right next to the main street on a tiny lot, another street a few feet away on the rear side. There is a picnic table left and right. Not the ideal venue for a big crowd.

We had supper in the famous Mizpah Hotel, now owned and operated by a California Wine family. They are restoring the century plus old building that was the tallest building



in the state during the big gold and silver rush. The food is excellent, but a tad spendy.

I have not left room for a picture of the Best Western High Desert Inn. Most remiss, as it was the best of them all, the entire ten day trip. Very friendly and helpful staff. The building was not a great architectural achievement, but it was soundly built and quiet during the night.



March 14, Thursday *Tonopah to Lake Tahoe, Reno 333.8 miles*

The highway from Tonopah to Lake Tahoe is long, nearly flat, and seems straight because the curves are long and gradual. Actually, it weaves around various



ranges of mountains. They're not labeled as you drive by, so you have to do research if you want detailed information. Personally, I'm content to leave that blank. I'll just call them whatever comes into my head and move on.

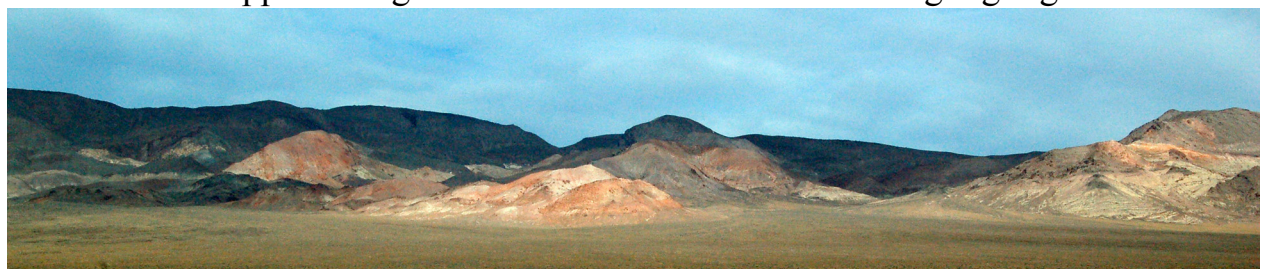
There is a variety, thanks to all the mining that has gone on over the years.



A mining road leads off the highway to this operation; it did not look active.



A break in the approaching cloud formation created interesting highlights:



About halfway to a town called Mina, the highway patrol came from the other direction and pulled us and



everyone else headed north to the side of the road. A huge object that required both lanes was being transported toward Tonopah; one presumes it was headed to one of the military test ranges. It was encapsulated; no way to tell what was inside. It moved slowly, as if fragile—about 20 miles an hour. We waited about 15 minutes or so for it to approach and pass by. It started as a teeny red dot in the distance.

We got to see lots of other top secret military stuff on the way to Lake Tahoe. Actually, we got to see stuff at a distance and guess what it was. A few signs helped, a few didn't. I don't know what the snow capped peaks at the left are



named; it's too far south to be the Tahoe mountains. The elevation on the plateau averages between 3500-4500 feet.

You can see how it looked to navigate around these hills and ranges—sometimes the hills were close by.





I call this one
“minecone.”

This next one is unlike
any other I saw; textures,
colors, all different. The
black patch in the center
looks like a bed of coal;

this is all nature’s handiwork. A photogenic area, this. On the other side of the road, a bit of color is framed nicely; there seems to be moisture in this area. The



atypical green ground cover vanished when we passed through to the next valley.



The highway turned north toward Mina.

The highway runs on the east side of these mountains.



Before Mina, we drove through an area without an official sign or designation; one roadmap shows Coaldale. Maybe that's it, maybe not. All we could see was the Lobster Crossing and the Playmate Ranch.

I couldn't make out the other sign—something Kat. {we discovered later it's Wild Kat, another establishment, out of camera range.} The missing capital on one column may be an indication that the ranch is in disrepair—or that someone wanted a souvenir—this place *is* miles away from everywhere, after all.

Except for Mina, elev 4540.





Now, Mina is an interesting town. It looks like it's in the midst of the Great Depression at first glance.

This is right on the street [the highway, actually], and suffers from neglect, but *not* vandalism.

Hmm, says I.

Others also *seem* neglected, but they all have a satellite dish. One got the impression that people might be peeking out of the curtains to see who the intruders were.



The town is tidy. From the highway, the only sign of commerce was a curious unmarked building rising amid the ruins of a former brick General Store.



A unique restaurant—the Desert Lobster Café—is open 13 hours a day. It features a side entrance with a ramp for the disabled, and a grand front door that passes through a... lobster boat? What is it with *lobsters* around here?



It's a short run from Mina to Hawthorne. The hills betray that the mines used to be a big thing hereabouts.



And still are.



Hawthorne was the next town; like Tonopah, has major military operations, some



visible, some not. An army depot to the south, and various naval operations to the north. This is where the special units train for assignments in Afghanistan; the terrain and altitude is similar. The long straight beige line above is *row upon row* of buildings.

Another surprise was the Naval Undersea Warfare Center. I'd just seen a lobster boat in the desert, but... submarines?



Note the snow in the hills behind. That's a hint about where we are headed before long: Virginia City and Lake Tahoe. But let's don't get ahead of ourselves—we have to pass through Paiute country.

First we pass by Lake Walker. Still sizeable, it has been shrinking due partly to overuse by agriculture. Its only source is the Walker River, running through the



Walker River Reservation. Now they are trying all kinds of conservation programs to keep it from turning to brine the way Salt Lake did. The fish are in trouble already.

North of Lake Walker, a small Paiute town called Schurz [it's named after a Secretary of the Interior]. A considerable number of these large trees grow in groups or clusters. They must look welcoming in spring and summer. Teeny tiny buds were starting to form. No evergreens in sight; 4100 feet must be too low.



One nifty formation to show: thin black strata appearing out of a sand bank.



A huge surprise as we approached Fallon: a new planting of alfalfa. *Green*, real green.



A few miles of genuine farmland as opposed to ranchland surrounds the city. It benefits from water diverted from the Truckee River. Elevation is 3960, population 8600. The Stillwater Naval Air Station is east of town on the way to Ely.



It was lunchtime when we arrived. Alas, no Carl's. We settled for Burger King.



A *flock*—about a dozen and a half seagulls were assembled like a bunch of pigeons, right in the middle of the Burger King driveway. They did not want us to drive in there; a meeting of some kind was in session. We stopped abruptly, not wanting to run them over. I asked politely, so they let us pass, reluctantly. One wonders if the Navy brings these in, along with the lobsters.



produced both gold and silver. Remnants of the old veins remain, but not in commercial quantity. The colorful rock is now quarried for use in decorative masonry and landscaping.

Silver Springs is the lowest in elevation [4199] and had a population of 5296 in 2010. It is a now modern community with an airport. The economy is based primarily on recreation. The bold appearance of the city water reservoir on the slope above announced the town; the town itself, alas, is off the highway to the left, and we didn't get to see it.

At this point I insisted on a side trip to Virginia City. It wasn't far, and I figured we could spend an hour or so—I had been there on a church camp field trip when I was 9 or 10, and I was curious about how accurate my memory was.

State highway 341 goes north from US 50 and winds up the canyon of the famed Comstock Lode. Three towns along this road grew to prominence in the late 19th and early 20th century: Silver Springs, Gold Hill, and Virginia City. The Comstock



Gold Hill is higher up the valley at 5440; it's almost a ghost town—191 people in 2005. But it looks enchanting and picturesque at first glance.



At its peak in 1880, 8000 lived there.

Several refurbished homes and colorful retaining walls line the road that winds up the canyon. A city bandstand complete with tiered seating looks postcard perfect.

Gold Hill always competed with Virginia City,



highest up the canyon at 6200 feet, where 15000 once lived. To a modern eye—and modern vehicles—they are so close together that they might as well be one town.



The most famous resident was Mark Twain, who's book *Roughing It* tells of his travels in the old west, including the time he spent working as a reporter for the Territorial Enterprise, Virginia City's newspaper. That and many *many* of the original buildings are still in use.

It's a shame we didn't allow time to walk down the street and get the feel of an old west main street—the wooden sidewalks are still there, still in use. Some buildings look as if the paint was a hundred years old. There must be close to a mile of the old commercial district still intact and in use—as a tourist center, primarily.



The Red Light Museum is freshly painted. They operate a cafe as well, it seems.

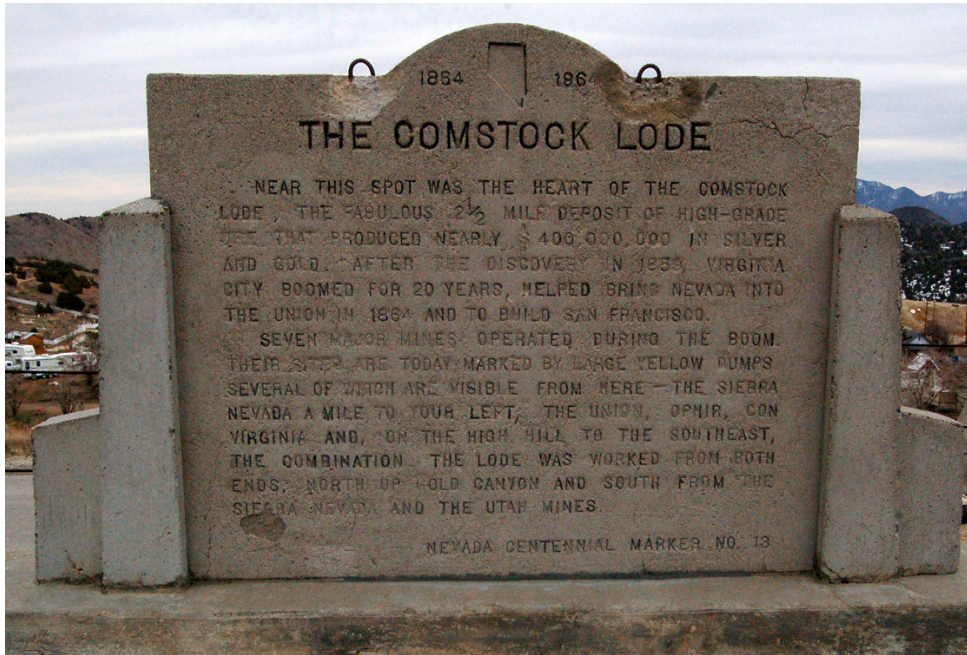
A serious effort of restoration has been achieved with the Ward 4 School. There was no way to tell if it is now a school—we drove past without pausing to see if there was any playground equipment or school buses. The city is on a steep hillside, and it is not possible to see downslope from a car window moving up the street at 25 mph. There is a sizeable parking area.



On the upper side of town several homes have been refurbished. This



one, still right on the street, sports a concrete curb and a gravel sidewalk. I can't make out what the sign reads. It may be a Bed and Breakfast. But where to park? I see no allowances being made, generally, to accommodate modern vehicles. Except that all the hitching rails have been removed.



At the upper end of town a roadside vista/picnic area has historical plaques and monuments. It is a good spot for looking across and down the canyon. A state marker was installed there in 1964.

A colorful monument to Julia C. Bulette stands in a prominent position. She was a significant personage in the Comstock Days. The colorful stones are gathered from the area.

The Red Light Museum features extensive exhibits about her role in the city's history.





Next to the Bulette monument, one gets a good view of boot hill:

The famed Piper's Opera House, now a non profit center, still serves as an entertainment venue.

The current structure was built by entrepreneur John Piper in 1885 to replace his 1878 opera house that had burned down. The 1878 venue, in turn, had replaced Piper's 1863 venue which was

destroyed by the 1875 Great Fire in Virginia City. Mark Twain spoke from the original Piper's stage in 1866. A century later he spoke there again as portrayed by Hal Holbrook in his one-man play Mark Twain Tonight!

American theatrical producer David Belasco was stage manager at the second opera house before moving to New York City. Piper's played host to Shakespearean thespians such as Edwin Booth, and musical performers Lilly Langtry, Al Jolson and John Philip Sousa.

How do I know all this? I looked it up in Wikipedia, of course.



The highway does an interesting loop of sorts, creating a truck route which they identify as 342; we took that on the way down the canyon. The mound of grey



tailings are unusual. They look recent.

This is one of the original Comstock tailings. The trees are well on the way to



reclaiming the area.

We reached the end of 341 and headed west on 50 to Lake Tahoe. An interesting cloud formation had been forming in the southeast. Dramatic at this point, it had an unfortunate side effect. It gave the automatic features of my Nikon another set



of contradictory indicators, and it couldn't figure out the correct exposure. Neither could I, so many pictures did not come out well at all. This was a problem at several points in the trip. Someday I will stop everything and learn how to operate the blasted thing. Meanwhile, I'll try to find enough useable snapshots to finish this report.

We were close already, so the climb up the east side of the Carson Range began almost immediately. Near the top we passed Spooner Lake [elevation 7100 feet], still frozen over.



Modern Lake Tahoe was shaped and landscaped by scouring glaciers during the Ice Ages, a million or more years ago. It is the second deepest lake in the U.S., with a maximum depth of 1,645 feet—trailing only Oregon's Crater Lake at 1,949 feet. Tahoe is 22 miles long and 12 miles wide, has 72 miles of shoreline and 191 square miles of surface area. The surface elevation is 6225 feet.

As luck would have it, highway 50 led almost directly to the part of the lake that I wanted to see, the church camp I had attended when I was 10 and 11 years old. It lies just south of Glenbrook, where the state has emplaced a historical marker.

Glenbrook was the headquarters of a vast logging operation in the pioneer days. Tahoe timber was used to build Virginia City and all the towns in northwest Nevada during the Comstock boom. The lumber was floated from Spooner's summit via a v-flue system, eliminating the need to transport lumber via wagon.



A short distance south, the sign marking the entrance to the camp appears.

Camp Galilee is owned and operated by the Episcopal

Diocese of Nevada. It is a much larger operation now than in 1948 and 1949, when I was there last. They have paved paths, lots of buildings and it operates year around.

The cookhouse looks unchanged; it was the assembly hall as well as the eating hall.

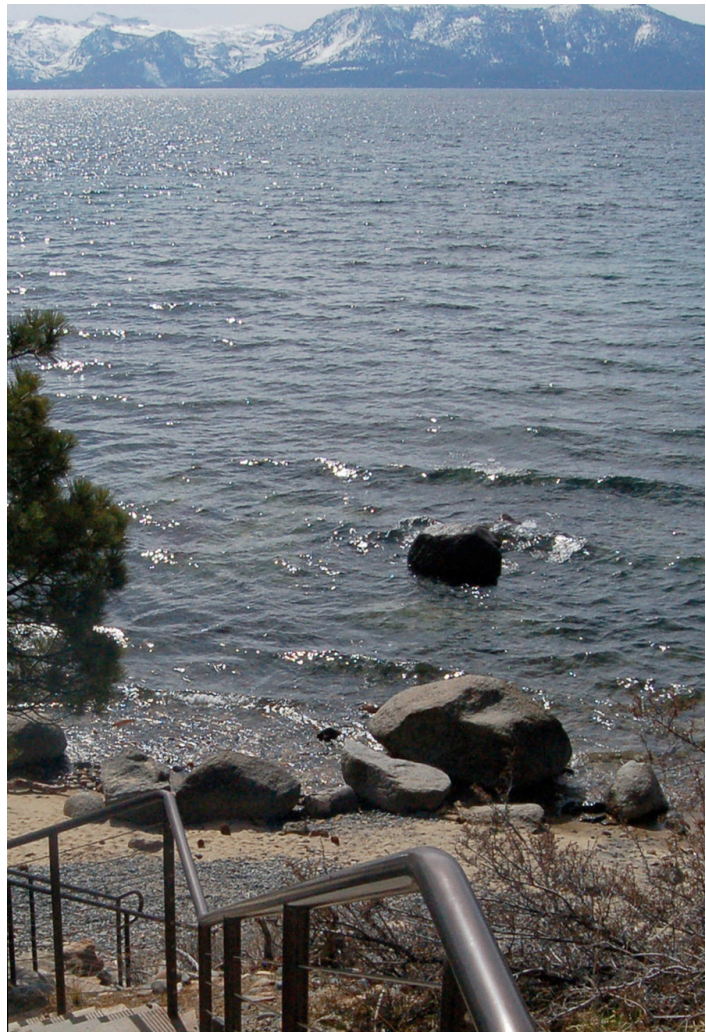


There was a retreat or something going on, so I was reluctant to explore beyond the main trail to the lakeshore. In deference to the sign at the top of the drive, we parked by the highway above and walked down.



The gathering place is still there among the trees, with the chapel standing close by. Named St. John in the Wilderness, the chapel opened in 1948, a year I was at camp. I recall the official opening ceremony well. The Bishop came from Reno to officiate. It was still unfurnished inside. We carried folding chairs over from the cookhouse. The altar end of the chapel had a raised platform, as usual; but the altar is at the west end, not east. In the center, a huge window dominates—aimed across the lake at the snow cross that appears on the mountain as the snow melts. One of the acolytes fainted during the service. He was close to the big window, so it was easy to see what had happened. That is an eerie sound, a collapsing acolyte.

The Swimming Rock remains in place—but it looks a lot smaller now. To a ten year old, it was massive, and jumping off it into



the lake was a demonstration of courage. The water, by the way, is on the chilly side. There was no handrail or concrete walkway in those days. The beach is



pebbled, so they hauled in a few truckloads of sand. They used to do that annually because it would wash away. It looks about due for another load.

In the 1940s, the cabins, as such, were small platform structures with roll down netting for walls. Bunks lined the walls and there was room to go in or out, but not much more. They seem to have replaced those with regular cabins, complete with electric power. I did not explore,

so I am sure there are many more buildings. They may even have plumbing. In



1948, we had communal outhouses, of course, and no electricity.

What amazed me most was the ease with which we located the place. It's right on the main highway. My memory had it down a dusty road, away from civilization and hard to get to. I'm sure things have been upgraded all around; the highway must be in the same place. In those days, however, the only commercial development of consequence was south at the California border. There are hundreds of private developments along the shore now.

The big deal in those days was the Cal-Neva Lodge; it straddled the border. A painted line ran through the place; we had fun hopping back and forth. The Nevada side had a casino, off limits to us kids, and the California side had a boat ride that went part way around the California side of the lake. We had fun spotting the teeny church camp way off on the other side.

Now the state line is a city boulevard with horse and carriage rides; Cal Neva lodge, if it still exists, is blocks away, on the shore.

Today, 50 is a four lane highway.



The drive through South Lake Tahoe is like any other city of over 21,000 inhabitants. The city is new—established in 1965.

Our route leaves 50 to go around the lake west and north on California State Highway 89, then back to Reno via I 80.

Highway 89 connects many mountain towns from south of Tahoe north to Mount Shasta. Portions of it are closed by snowfall from time to time. Not far from the junction with highway 50, the gate stood open, ready to be shut at any time. A few weeks earlier we might not have been able to drive this route.

Here I'll toss in a few bits of information about what's coming up on this leg of the trip. The idea is to prep you for the next series of photos. I have borrowed info from some roadside plaques along the way, and tucked in a few facts from good ol' Wikipedia.

The Lake Tahoe Basin was formed by vertical faulting. Uplifted blocks created the Carson Range on the east and the Sierra Nevada on the west. Down-dropped blocks created the Lake Tahoe Basin in between.

The highest points are Freel Peak at 10,891 feet, Monument Peak at 10,067 feet, Pyramid Peak at 9,985 feet, and Mount Tallac at 9,735 feet. The north shore has three peaks at 10,000+ feet: Mount Rose, Houghton and Relay peaks.

I have made no attempt to determine if any of these peaks were captured in my snapshots. Most likely one or two of them are,



but they appear as an assemblage or ridge rather than a row of peaks; some are

jagged crags, others are mounds or steep slopes. The picture above shows the route the highway takes up the west ridge from the southern edge. The roadcut is the diagonal line about a third of the way down in the tall timber. Lakeshore is at the very bottom of the image.



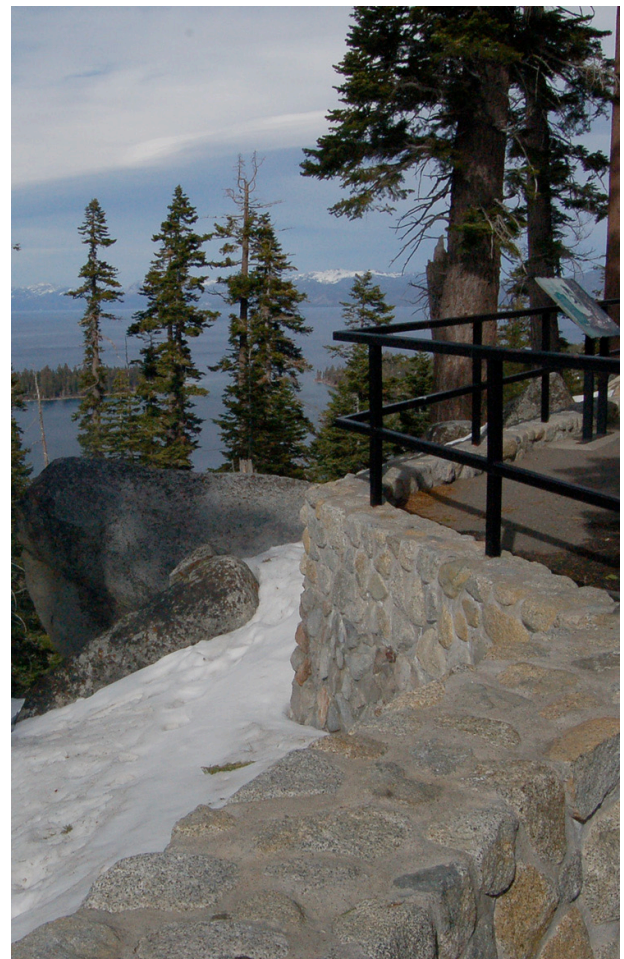
Dense forest disguises some of the geology. The drive along the southern side is primarily through forest with only an occasional glimpse of the lake.

The southwest corner of the lake is in Emerald Bay State Park. Bayview Vista is the first vantage point.

Road equipment on the ready; the storm that followed us to Tucson dumped a lot of snow in the Sierras.



The lake is the result of melting snow filling the lowest part of the basin. Rain and runoff add additional water; Mount Pluto eruptions formed a natural dam on the north side.



Emerald Bay is a National Natural Landmark. Features include Eagle Falls, Fannete Island, and Vikingsholm, a 38-room mansion that is considered one of the finest examples of Scandinavian architecture in the United States.

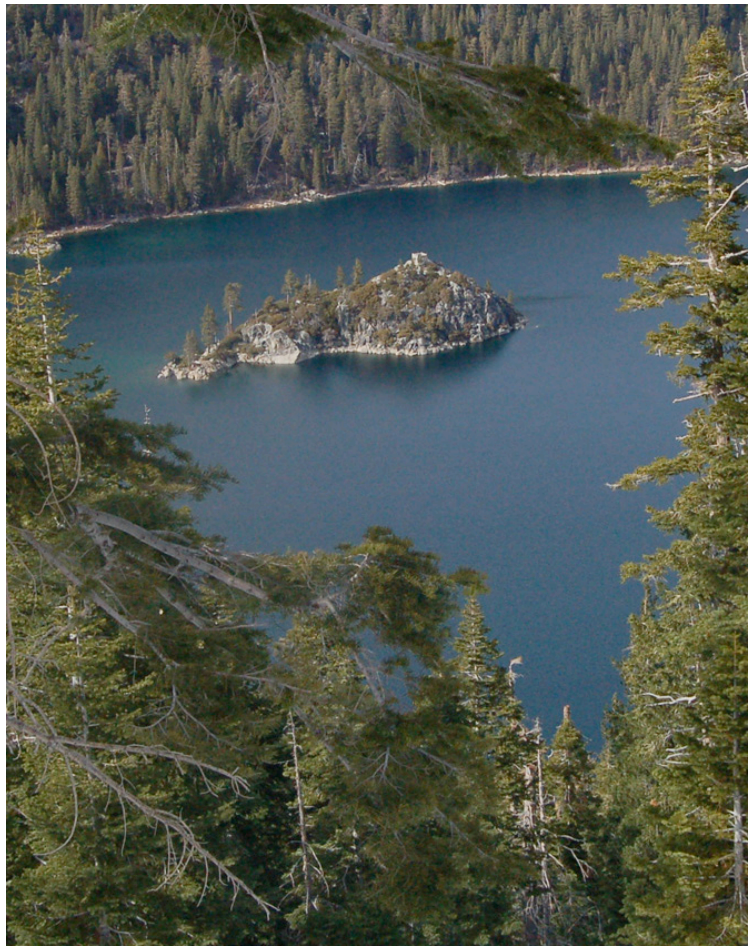


Vikingsholm castle was built by Mrs. Lora Josephine Knight as a summer home. It was constructed in 1929 by 200 workers. Parts of the structure employ old-fashioned construction methods that use no nails or spikes. Most of the building was made from materials found at Lake Tahoe.

There is no access by road. It is reached by boat or by the trail through the park. The tall trees and terrain shield it from the highway.

Fannette is the only island in Lake Tahoe. It has a history all its own, and has had more than one name. Mrs. Knight had a unique tea room built on the peak for entertaining special guests.

Eagle Falls can be seen from several points, including the Vikingsholm vista and parking area. Many segments were still under the snow.



Glacial remains at the Vikingsholm promontory



We continued north on 89; the highway passes several privately owned parcels, lakefront marinas and overnight lodges. Clearly people at Meeks Bay live here year around; these homes had been under a great deal of snow very recently.



It was still the off season on the lake—no boats in sight. This dock was intriguing.



Nobody home.



At Tahoe City, Highway 89 turns away from the lake and heads northwest toward Truckee. We could have continued around the lake on Highway 28 and returned to Reno via Highway 50, but that would have meant arriving after dark. We opted instead to connect with Interstate 80.

The Squaw Valley ski area is off to the west, but we didn't have the time or inclination to take a side trip. No photos taken along this section of 89 are worth troubling



with. The Truckee River runs alongside all the way, but no views or vistas; along here it looks like an irrigation ditch as much as anything.

The Truckee is the lake's only outlet; controlled by a dam, it flows northeast through Reno and into Pyramid Lake, which has no outlet. Only one third of the water that leaves Lake Tahoe leaves via the Truckee; the rest evaporates.

Truckee was named after a Paiute chief. His Paiute name was Tru-ki-zo. He was the father of Chief Winnemucca. The first Europeans to cross the Sierra Nevada encountered his tribe. The friendly Chief rode toward them yelling "Tro-kay!" which is Paiute for "Everything is all right." The travelers assumed he was yelling his name. Chief Truckee later served as a guide for John C. Frémont.



Shortly after entering the freeway, we saw the California Fruit Inspection Station appear on the other side. They have to relieve travellers from Nevada of all their fresh fruit and produce. Notice that white cloud: it hung there all day long. [see above, p 110] Is that material for Stephen King, or what?



Soon the landscape changed dramatically: we headed down the famed Donner Pass.

Along here the Truckee looks a little more like a river. This is a few miles above Verdi.





A historical marker marks the likely spot important in Truckee history when this was occupied by native Americans. Now it's occupied by prosperous ranches; the one across the way has a substantial creek emptying into the Truckee. This is the



beginning of the area called Verdi, just west of Reno. It was named after the opera composer Giuseppe Verdi by a chance: his name was drawn out of a hat. It was a logging town originally—but the harvest was total, and the land opened up to housing development and gaming operations.

Next: entering Reno.



A last glance back at the Carson Range, as we pass under the unique overpasses on our way to downtown Reno.



We were ready to call it a day, but I wanted to get a quick tour downtown to see the famous Littlest Big City sign before checking in at the hotel. It was close to sunset, and the black sky to the east appeared more ominous by the minute. I was afraid that a thunder system was about to move in at last, and we wouldn't get a chance.





Reno is easier to navigate than Las Vegas. The casinos are not as elaborate and flashy. The traffic was extremely light, and we found the famous original sign right away.

However, we also discovered that it had been relocated; a new sign had been built for the “main drag position.” The original sign, historically important, has been preserved. I remember seeing the old one when I was a child.



On the way to the hotel, we saw a few interesting buildings. First was the spectacular National Bowling Stadium.



The Harrah's Club does not look at all like the Las Vegas version. We had intended to visit the Auto Museum, but it slipped our minds, I guess. Maybe we were going to do it in the morning.

On the way to the hotel we passed the Renown Health center—once the Washoe Medical Center—where I was born. It seems they have put up a new building.



We were glad to call it a day. We had supper in the hotel restaurant. It was a good restaurant—not gourmet, but not fast food either.

Our room was well located, similar in many ways to the Tucson Best Western Airport, but on the ground floor. Close to the car, and easy to access, once the keyed outer door was opened. Its quality was not at all diminished by its proximity to the airport. I heard one plane take off. It's worth the savings, these airport Best Westerns. They cost 30 to 40 dollars less than the downtown BWs.

I had a different view in the morning.

March 15, Friday Reno to Portland 546.8 miles

Arose at 7:15. The accommodations at the B/W PLUS Airport Plaza Hotel in Reno were pathetic: no outlets for charging cell phones and laptops, the vanity light required a room key to operate, and the clock was unplugged; the outlet, behind a two ton headboard, was unreachable. The room heater came on in the middle of the night with a roar—in spite of the fact that it had not been programmed to do so.

At registration a full-page instruction sheet on how to operate the room heat unit was provided. For openers, the room key had to be inserted into the special wall outlet that turned on the vanity light. Instructions were so convoluted that it wasn't worth the time to figure them out; the room was fine without either heat or air conditioning being invoked. Little did I suspect that I had to program it to stay dormant.

The only usable surface was a small round table with a lamp and two straight back chairs; no reading chair was supplied to accompany the ostentatious floor lamp by the bed.

No courtesy breakfast; guests are expected to dine in the hotel restaurant. We chose to seek out a Carl's instead. The breakfast burger was marginal in quality, and the coffee was their standard—brine, but fresh. If only they had hot water at hand; diluted it's quite tolerable. We filled up the gas tank at a place called Rainbow Market. Mike's trusty phone had shown the way again.

The day after returning, the Best Western people sent an email feedback questionnaire as always, and I opened fire. Within hours they replied:

Your stay at BEST WESTERN PLUS Airport Plaza Hotel

Sally Cao <noreply@app.medallia.com>

Mar 16

to me, Sally

Dear Leland Hall,

Thank you for completing the survey regarding your recent stay at our property.

On behalf of our entire team, I would like to apologize for not exceeding your expectations. Your satisfaction is important to us and we will be using the feedback you gave us to implement improvements to ensure we offer a better experience for guests in the future.

I hope that you will consider staying with us again so that we can have another chance to provide you with a superior experience.

If I can provide any assistance, please don't hesitate to contact me directly at 775-348-6370.

Sincerely,
Sally Cao
Front Office Manager
BEST WESTERN PLUS Airport Plaza Hotel

I give them credit for being courteous and paying attention.

Anyway—leaving Reno is
less interesting than
entering—at least if you're
heading out on Highway 395:



At last, after a few miles, a
visual treat. Lava flows that span thousands of years dominate the drive to the
Oregon border. I saw no traces of layered upthrust ridges.



Our route took us east of the Cascade Range from its southernmost point at Mount Lassen. We had planned to go through the pass between Lassen and Shasta, but the highway was still closed. That area always gets a deep snowfall.

I don't think we saw Lassen itself, but there's no doubt that we saw part of the Lassen system. The first peaks I could identify were Eagle and Warren Peaks; they are northeast of Lassen, and southeast of Susanville.



An intriguing mysterious object along the way was this curious structure. No vehicles were present. A vent is at the peak, and a mercury vapor streetlight peeks over the right shoulder. And the sand pile? This isn't mining country, is it?



The Modoc National Forest encompasses most of this corner of the state; generally, the presence of pine trees indicated we were at forest altitude. At this latitude, forest starts at a little over 4300 feet. A recent roadside fire had taken out a few acres.



This was just above the town of Likely—population 63, elevation 4447.

The town was initially known as South Fork, named after the South Fork of the Pit River; it was renamed at the insistence of the United States Post Office, which insisted at that time that Post Offices could only have one-word names. Residents were unable to agree what to name their town until a local rancher observed that they would most likely never agree upon a name, at which point someone nominated the name, “Likely,” and the name was voted in.

One of the last of the American Indian Wars was fought at Infernal Caverns, a short distance from Likely.

More about that later.





North of town,
most likely a
freak gust of wind.

An interesting layer of lava lies atop a slope just south of Alturas; the houses on



top are just out of sight. Alturas appears right around the curve.

I can't find any information on how or why that name. Originally, it was Dorrisville, after the Dorris brothers who built the bridge across the Pit river. In Spanish, it means a high place. That fits, but the area was not part of the Spanish settlements. This part of the country, like southern Oregon, was taken from the native populations by force—some would say genocide. The gold rush of the 1860s sparked it—at that time the Modocs occupied everything from Lassen to the Klamath basin. The Modoc wars in the 1870s were particularly fierce. There are no reservations; the Modoc tribal name survives, but what few people survived were forced to relocate in Oklahoma. A few Modocs escaped to Oregon.

I took a few snapshots in Alturas. Some oddities for your amusement.



This willow tree caught my eye originally, but the house fascinates. It has one of the smallest front yards I have seen.

Downtown Alturas enjoys a spectacular wall mural sponsored by Pacific Power. A more modest sign announces the Calico Cow. I'm not at all sure what they do there.



In the next block the movie theatre caught my attention. The Episcopal Church sign seemed out of place. I dug around on the Internet and discovered that there is a church three blocks down. Or might be. It's on the website, but the satellite photo shows an empty lot. Maybe they use the theatre temporarily? Awkward... *The Impossible* with Naomi Watts is showing three days a week.

But there is more fun here: look at the curious brick patterns on the side of the building. These suggest that there have been changes to the structure made over

the years. I can't figure out what those concrete elements are or were. Aesthetically, I approve. As for the menu at the coffee house at the left? Wild Mustard Bagels Etc.? Thanks, but I'll wait for the next Lobster Crossing.



A few blocks farther, a wonderful mission style railroad station, complete with bells in the belfry, is now owned by the local Elks lodge. Sadly, Pioneer Realty upstages them completely.



I wonder if they ever ring those bells.

Enough of this; north of Alturas we ascended to another stretch of the Modoc National Forest. They must have had a dose of that big storm we passed through on the way to Tucson. For miles, the place is a virtual swamp.



A few miles farther, a fabulous view of Mount Shasta; it had been peeking at us for a while.



A nifty volcanic formation on the other side of the railroad:



One last California snapshot: an agricultural building of some sort caught my eye; the degrading paint on the south wall is fascinating.



I didn't
know it
was
possible to
see Mt.
Shasta
from
Oregon.
Guess
what:



We stopped in Klamath Falls for lunch. No Carl's Jr., alas, so we made do with Burger King. I didn't take any diverting snapshots on the way through town. Once we were headed north on 97, I got an interesting piece of local color at ODOT's rock quarry. Sorry about the reflector post in the foreground.



Here one sees what is under the volcanic rock. A mile farther, looking west across



Klamath Lake, a stunning view of Mount McLoughlin.

From there the highway moves north toward the Columbia River. We had five possible routes to Portland: The Willamette Pass, The McKenzie Pass, The Santiam, past Mount Hood, or via Interstate 84, the Columbia gorge freeway. We elected to use 58 for a couple of reasons. First, the drive time. We wanted to get to Portland before dark. And Mike wanted to see this route in particular; I was content, not having driven it for over 30 years. A couple of snapshots along 97 are worth sharing. First, a road cut—this looks like it was an ancient lake or seabed.



I don't know what to make of this one. Is it a bear? A cow? A prehistoric something? It seems to have a white underside. The whatever-it-is is at Chiloquin, halfway between Klamath Falls and the Willamette Pass junction. Hub City has a website, but no mention is made of the statue, or why they have crowded it so ungraciously with their signs.

Note the snow on the ground and the trees. Elevation is 4200 feet.



The parade of Cascade peaks is always stunning from Central Oregon. They are not obscured by the old Cascade Range foothills. The next in line is Mount Scott.

Mount Scott is a small stratovolcano on the southeast flank of Crater Lake. Its summit is 8934 feet, the highest point within Crater Lake National Park, and the tenth highest peak in the Oregon Cascades. The mountain is named for Oregon pioneer Levi Scott, founder of Scottsburg, Oregon.

It first erupted about 420,000 years ago; it's one of the oldest volcanoes in the Mount Mazama complex. It erupted mainly andesitic lavas before becoming extinct. Since it was relatively far away from the main flanks of Mount Mazama, it survived the mountain's massive explosion that occurred around 5700 BC, creating Crater Lake.



Fleeting glimpses of the next mountain were annoying. Finally, it occurred to me that we would have to find a road headed west in order to get a clear shot. Behold, along came a junction with Highway 168. We drove in a mile or so and found an old logging unit. We pulled off and got a couple of great shots.



Mount Thielsen is an extinct shield volcano in the Oregon High Cascades. It stopped erupting 250,000 years ago; glaciers have heavily eroded the volcano's structure, creating precipitous slopes and its horn-like peak. The spire-like shape attracts lightning strikes and causes the formation of fulgurite, an unusual mineral.

All the Cascade peaks are the result of subduction; the Juan de Fuca Plate is being forced, slowly, under the North American Plate.

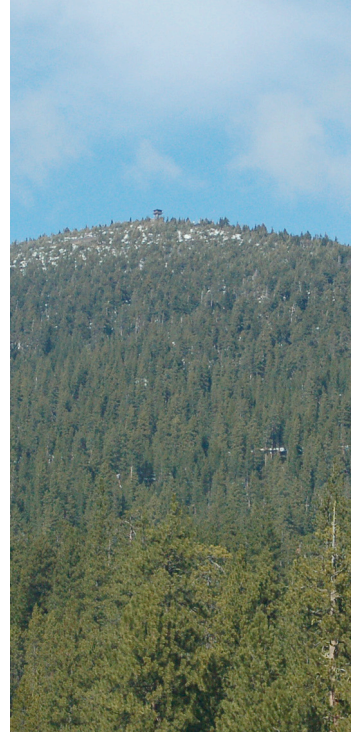
Volcanism near the Cascades dates back 55 million years, and extends from British Columbia to California. Thielsen is part of the High Cascades, a branch that includes Oregon

volcanoes less than 3.5 million years old, distinguished by their sharp peaks.

The surrounding area was originally inhabited by Chinook Native Americans; Jon Hurlburt, an early explorer of the area named the volcano after engineer Hans Thielsen, who played a major role in the construction of the California and Oregon Railroad.

Highway 58 runs across the southern shoulder of Odell Butte, a 7000 foot cinder cone. It still has an operational lookout tower. Details about how to visit—and when—are available at the Deschutes National Forest.

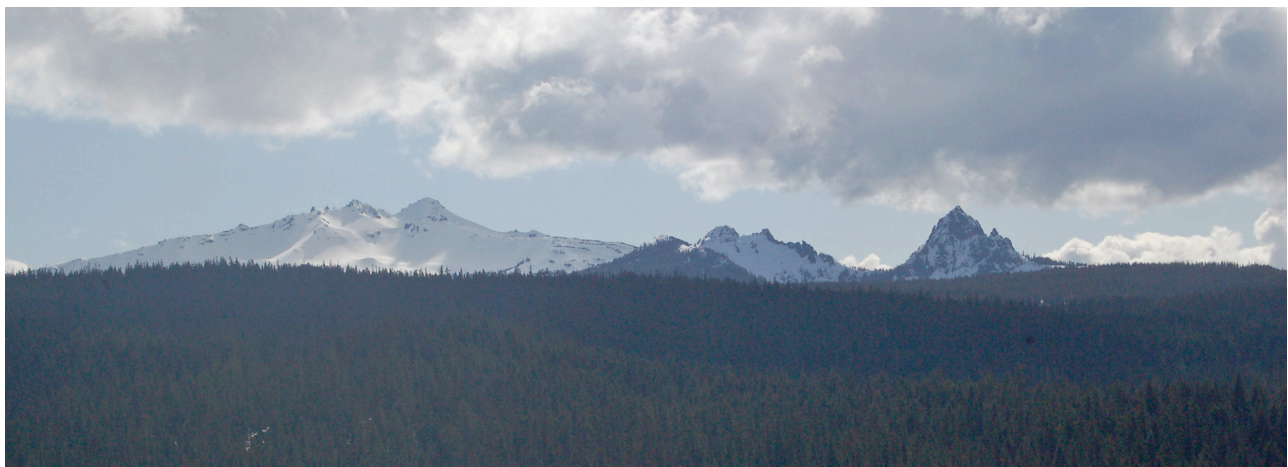
It is not like the lookouts of old—this one has electricity, and a road goes all the way to the top; it is gated, however.



After driving such vast distances, the Willamette Pass Highway seemed to flash by in no time at all. The packed snow on the road that we read about before leaving was gone, and it was clear sailing. There was still plenty of roadside snow at the pass.

This view of Diamond Peak is from the west side of the pass. First visible in front of Suttle Lake, this view shows more of the

peak and its elderly neighbor, Mount Yoran.



Diamond is probably younger than 100,000 years, but older than the last ice age. It first erupted from its northern summit, and then from a new vent a little to the south, now the primary peak. The mountain has several cirques from glacial erosion. It receives a heavy snow pack; snow fields on the northern side may have been glaciers as recently as 100 years ago.

Mt. Yoran is a much older volcanic core; similar to Thielsen, Washington and Three Fingered Jack, it has been subjected to more ice ages.

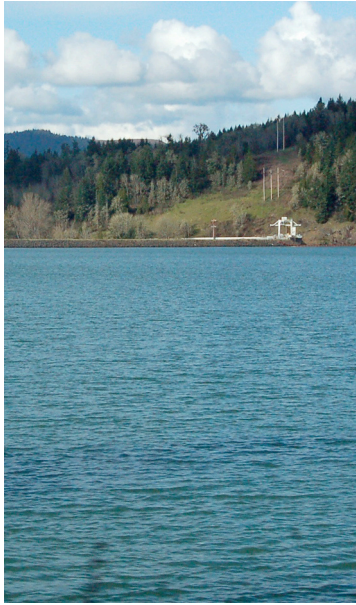
John Diamond, a Eugene pioneer who was scouting for a better route across the Cascades, was allegedly the first to climb Diamond, in 1852. I can't find out how Mt. Yoran got its name. Probably an honorific to some cavalry officer for a job well done. A Jewish officer, probably; it seems to be a Hebrew name.

Few Indian—or first American—names, seem to make it as place names in Oregon.

The west side forests look so *healthy* after miles and miles of pine trees. This is Lookout Point Reservoir. Lookout Point is an earth-type dam on the Middle Fork of the Willamette River. The dam's primary purpose is flood control, and



secondarily power generation and irrigation. It works in concert with Dexter Dam, immediately down river. These are both Federal dams operated by the Army Corps of Engineers.



Left: Dexter Dam and Reservoir. A good frontal view isn't available from the window of a passing car.

Right: Lookout Point isn't much better, even though we pulled off to the side.



The town of Lowell is on the other side of the Dexter reservoir. The famous covered bridge is still there, but no longer in use. Here's a shot from Oakridge:



Eugene has some new overpasses:



I drove this leg, I think; I don't remember where we made the swap, exactly. We stopped in Albany, where we had supper at an excellent Carl's; it's next to the old Tom Tom drive in.

I must drop in a few nifty views we had along I 5. When you take a minute to look, you see how wonderful it is to live here. This is north of Albany:





When spring comes to the Willamette Valley, the trees and grasses transform.

Sunset was pending as we approached Portland; the oak trees north of Salem:



Not to worry; we
arrived at Mike's
apartment exactly at
sunset, almost 12
hours after arising in
Reno.



I don't think a helicopter could land in Mike's Parking area; it would have to land in the lower lot.

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Postscript: at Show Low, where it was quite chilly when we arrived, I discovered that I was missing my heavy coat. I searched as hard as possible; it was missing. Clearly I had left it hanging in the closet at the Tucson hotel. The Show Low people were kind enough to call and inquire. Nothing was turned in. Ah well...

Then I discover this
photo taken by Mike
in Tucson—at the
very moment when I
was stopping to ask
myself if I had
forgotten anything:

