

# Ormand Family Activity

## July 2021: Independence Day in Fort Collins

Between the drought and the Wuhan pandemic, it's been two years since we could celebrate the Fourth of July by watching fireworks in Tucson. I don't get either concern: Every year they do the fireworks over "A" Mountain, and every year the gravel pit on the north side catches fire, drought or no drought, and every year the Fire Department puts it out. Big deal. The pandemic excuse is almost as bad, since at least where we watch it from the San Augustin Mercado, people are in lawn chairs well-separated from each other, the only gathering place is at the food trucks or in the Mercado building, but they could enforce their ineffective mask mandate in those places. Outside is the place to be in a pandemic. But Tucson has the same leftist nanny-staters in government as other cities, just not quite as oppressive or authoritarian as some (give it time), so - no fireworks. Last year, we went to Scottsdale and watched the fireworks and a vintage-aircraft flyover at the Fairmont Princess - that was fun. This year, Jerri suggests we could go back up to Fort Collins.

This suggestion is made the weekend before. I look up airfare - American (our airline of choice), \$1000 per. Delta (direct flight from Tucson), \$800 per. Southwest (also a direct flight), \$400. No-brainer. To get better rates from AA, you really have to anticipate travel by several months. Which is usually the case, but this is a rare spontaneous weekend vacation temptation.

Ground transportation is a problem. For whatever reason, only two rental places have cars, and at \$200 per day, that's an awful lot for the car to just sit at the hotel. I look into some limo services, which turn out to be between \$160 and \$300, competitive with taxis but still a lot. There is a shuttle that leaves the Denver airport to Fort Collins and can drop us off at our hotel for \$80. That's more attractive, but we have to be at the airport shuttle stop before 5:50 when it leaves. The Southwest flight I've picked arrives at 2:40, so that's workable, even if it means sitting at the airport waiting for a while - no worse than a layover. In the end, I'm glad to abandon the consideration when Charity informs us that she has a half-workday on Thursday and can pick us up.

The last hassle is what to do about animals. Usually we can get a friend or a nephew or niece to look after three cats, but trying to get someone lined up a week ahead is tough. I explore some pet sitting services; mostly operated by women, these services run about \$23 for a half-hour visit, to include feeding, litter-scooping, entertaining, and even taking in the mail. Unfortunately, they all want to consult before signing you on as a client, and want at least a week's notice. In the end, I can't get any help this way. Fortunately, a variety of relatives agree to do the job on different days. I'm thinking that we will probably sign up with a pet-sitting service after this.

## Thursday: Travel

The day of our departure arrives. We packed as much as we could, and got up early enough (so we thought) to finish our preparations and be at the airport with comfortable margin. But it never works that way, and we have to rush to leave and still arrive with any margin at all. In my ignorance of Southwest's check-in baggage policy (two free), I pay to check-in the bag with all the pharmaceuticals. We've tried to carry that bag through TSA before, and I will *not* willingly repeat that experience. It dawns on me afterward that if Jerri had checked bags separate from me, we could have had free check-in on two bags *each*. Oh, well.

Boarding is fine; the only unfortunate aspect is that Southwest boards basically in order of your check-in time. If I had been on the ball Wednesday instead of attending Raytheon work teleconference calls, I might have done better than we did; as it is, we are about 3/4s the way down the boarding order, and we cannot sit together.

After all the passengers were tucked in, the air steward informed us that due to rainstorms in Denver, the departure had been delayed. Denver International didn't want a bunch of airplanes in holding patterns (and running out of gas) waiting for the weather to clear, so they just inhibited all Denver-bound aircraft to wait until further notice. So the word is, up to an hour. We all sit on the airplane for an hour. Then the word is, up to maybe another hour. This time, the Southwest ground crew will let people off the airplane and tend to business, but we need to be alert for a call for imminent departure. Jerri and I just sit tight. After another hour, the word is, up to maybe another hour. This time, Jerri gets off the plane and comes back with some sandwiches. After a while, the word is, we are cleared to leave, so the passengers are collected back into the airplane and *three hours later*, we finally take off. I'm feeling glad that we're not depending on the 5:50 shuttle, and we didn't reserve a limo for a pickup at a certain time.

We had notified Charity when the plane left the gate, so our meet-up is more or less synchronized. After arriving and recovering our bags, we go out on the curb to wait. And wait. And wait. And then an airport cop comes by asking all the other people waiting if they are taking a taxi, since local ground arrival pick-up is the next level down. DIA has three levels. We've made this mistake before. About the same time, Charity calls asking where we are. Eventually we descend to the bottom level and meet Charity who has illegally left her vehicle at the end of the pick-up zone, but fortunately we get to her car, load up, and leave before the airport cops can hassle her.

The plan for tonight was to gather at one of our favorite Denver restaurants, Cinzettis, in Northglenn. It's an Italian "market" buffet, which you wouldn't think would be much ("buffet"), but it is beautifully appointed and the cuisine and the selection is really good. [www.cinzettis.com/colorado](http://www.cinzettis.com/colorado)

Now, Faith had to work today til 5:30, so she wasn't going to be able to get here until about the time the travellers were going to get there ourselves, so that's fine. We invited Dakota (Charity's beau), and he was able to come. We invited John and Becky and however many of their kids could come, but mid-route, Becky decided that her early morning work

schedule at the hospital did not permit a late night in Denver, so they cancelled. In the end, Faith arrived first, followed by Dakota, and they made a table request in anticipation of our arrival. In the meantime, Charity was plodding (well, "plodding" is not the right term when Charity is driving) across Denver and up I-25, and we stopped to fill her tank before getting to Cinzetti's. It wasn't very long after greeting Faith and Dakota that the annunciator gadget started flashing and vibrating, and so we settled to a fine evening of great food and conversation. Well, what little we could hear of it - the room in which we were placed was not the quiet interior, with wall coverings and carpet and the gentle tinkle of cutlery and murmuring of adjacent conversation; the walls and floor were bare and hard, and we were seated next to an extended India Indian family, with several small children chasing each other around the table and shrieking. It was still a mostly enjoyable and somewhat amusing evening.

After dessert (and past the restaurant's closing time), we take our leave of Dakota. Faith departs in her car, and Charity drives us up to Fort Collins. We stop at a Walmart to pick up some water for mommy's breathing machine, and then we are dropped off at our hotel.

### Friday: Loveland Day 1

Today, Faith works until early afternoon, and Charity is going to put some casual admin time in at the clinic. Jerri and I sleep as late as we dare in consideration of the time window for the complementary breakfast. Usually we stay at the Kiva Inn up on Mulberry, in part because the University Best Western is always fully occupied. In July, after the term at Colorado State University is over, this is not a problem.



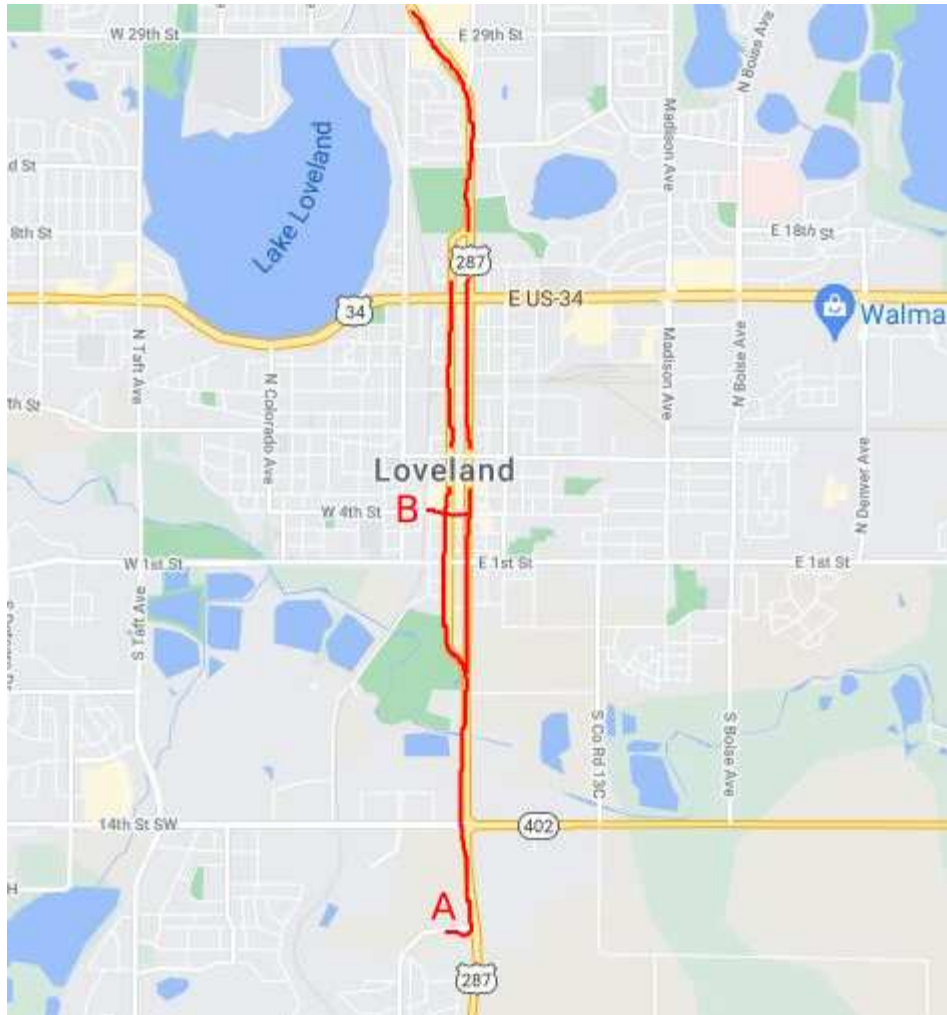
It's a nice hotel. Nothing special, but the Kiva Inn isn't either. Not a fleabag like some of the Route 66 places we stayed. Not as nice as the Elizabeth Hotel downtown, and not even close to the Broadmoor, but it is still comfortable. It is also very conveniently placed. It's a mile from the College/Mountain intersection, in the heart of downtown Fort Collins. That's an easy walk, if we were inclined to walk and didn't have a child coming to pick us up around noon.

The breakfast is decent - scrambled eggs and bacon and bread stuffs, Comparable to the Kiva Inn. "Real" hotels (like the Elizabeth and the Oxford in Denver) don't have complementary breakfasts. It's a beautiful morning, so we take our food out in the tiny little patio. Across the street is the CSU campus and the "Fieldhouse",



which is apparently a gymnasium. There is a queue of children entering the open Fieldhouse, and even more children in groups here and there on the lawn. Probably day camps. As we leave the breakfast room / hotel lobby, I take note of a rack of bicycles for rental use by hotel guests. Reaching downtown would be real easy!

It has occurred to me that in our haste to leave the house yesterday, I failed to remember my hat. I'm going to need a hat over my head in the summer Colorado sunshine. Charity's college friend Brenna is connected with the family who operates the Whiteside's outfitter shop in Loveland (her great aunt). I got my old hat at a tourist shop at Long Beach, and it's showing its age and abuse, so I'm looking forward to getting a properly fitted hat.



College Avenue in Fort Collins is US highway 287. After several pleasant miles through Front Range farming country, US 287 becomes the main street through the city of Loveland.

As we enter Loveland, I observe a fiberglass heart sculpture. Not this one; we're past it before I even think of getting out the camera. There are apparently several such hearts placed all around the community, and it seems to be a local game or challenge to find them all.



[lovelandheartpictures.com](http://lovelandheartpictures.com)





[www.whitesidesboots.com](http://www.whitesidesboots.com)

Charity guides us through central Loveland and to the southern outskirts, to location "A" on the map above. Per the website there are three Whiteside's locations. From the state of the sign and the rustic nature of the building, this could be the first/oldest. Inside is a proper western outfitter. Cowtown back home might have a larger inventory, but Whiteside's is not just an urban cowboy fashion shop - among the western-style riding boots are steel-toed working boots.

There's a decent selection of hats, but of course most of them are the current "cowboy hat" style, with the creased crown and the rolled up brim, and most of those are straw hats. I'm after a broad-brimmed Stetson-type hat with a low crown, similar to my Long Beach tourist shop model. There are a few of these, but they are sized "Medium" or "Large". I was expecting an actual size, such as "11 1/2" or such, but I guess that would be a lot of hats to stock. Some of the "cowboy hats" have an actual size, but I'm not after those. In the end, I settle for a size "Large", which actually fits my head instead of sitting on top of it like the "Medium" (and the tourist shop hat). At least it's not size "Fat". Before checking out, we have to look at the selection of western shirts, some with outrageous colors and patterns which I could not imagine wearing in public.

After this limited accomplishment, Mom is saying it's time for lunch. Charity drives us back up to the city center. I don't know if there was intent or just random luck, but we end up parking at point "A" on the map, near the railroad tracks. Opposite is a cafe in what was formerly the Loveland station. For whatever reason we don't try out this cafe but instead proceed down 4th Street to see what we can see.



As we pass "B", I note that it is the "Rialto" theatre. We have a "Rialto" theatre in downtown Tucson, so I have to take a photo. Looks pretty nice, and it is a restored downtown working theatre with a schedule of upcoming attractions.



[www.rialtotheatercenter.org](http://www.rialtotheatercenter.org)

Mommy's tummy is growling, so she prevails on us to quit cutting bait and start fishing. Next door to the Rialto is Henry's Pub (location "C"). As we've travelled, a "pub" is just a small restaurant with an oversized bar, and Henry's fits the pattern. It is very popular, but it's at the tail end of the lunch hour so we get taken to a booth right away. As we look at the menu, Charity posits that Henry's is a "gastro-pub", that puts as much emphasis on the food as on the booze; otherwise, the menu would be brief compared with the drinks list. When our lunches arrive, we agree that it is quite good, and we enjoy our slightly delayed meal in a quiet and picturesque setting.



After lunch, we strike out again, crossing over to the other side. I get a photo of the Rialto in its more complete street-front context. As we pass "D", we notice that it is a dance studio, the "Lighthouse Dance Studio", and there is a fake lighthouse in the store display window. Jerri gets a charge. Location "E" is Canyon Collectibles, an antique and knick-knack shop, so of course we have to go in and look around.

Jerri discovers a rack of post-cards for national parks and picks out a handful without being clear on the price. At the check-out counter she discovers they are \$3 each - rather a lot more than post-cards anywhere else. It's a pricey handful by the time she leaves the shop.

We make our way back to Charity's car by the railroad tracks and leave Loveland. We hang out at the cottage until Faith arrives at the end of her working day. While we wait, we are introduced to Georgie, the little dog that the girls are watching while the owner, Melanie, is on vacation. We are told that Mel was checking up on Georgie and his caregivers before she left, even to peeking in through the window. From other stories we are told about Mel, we form the opinion of an older and eccentric and clueless and somewhat pushy neighbor.

Then we all leave and go shopping for some more stuff Mommy needs at King Soopers, the regional Kroger affiliate. While we hunt for the elusive items, we come across an "interesting" older woman with a unicorn head band. Charity and Faith found out belatedly just a few weeks about a Unicorn Festival in the area but failed to get there in time, so the lady's apparel was extra significant.

We are also searching for a T-Mobile shop so Jerri can get help with a cryptic message she received about our phones. But the places Charity thought should have a T-Mobile store didn't have one. One such place didn't have a T-Mobile store but it did have a Walgreen's, and therefore Jerri went in to get one more item. As I and the girls sat in the car waiting for Mom, we saw the same woman (without the headband) going into the same Walgreen's!

At last, near the Fort Collins Mall, there's a T-Mobile store with a helpful clerk that succeeds in updating Jerri and Faith's Apple phones and identifies the problem vaguely described in Jerri's message is located in my obsolete low-end (paid-for) Samsung phone. I will have to get a replacement before the end of the year, at which time T-Mobile (which now includes Sprint, our original carrier) switches to 5G.

The plan forms gradually to have dinner with Savannah their house-mate. Also known as



our pseudo-daughter; she's a cute, smart young lady involved in student ministry at their church. She's due to leave for a short-term mission trip to Albania at the end of next week. We would like to share our next meal with her, and we finally agree on PF Changs at the Centerra shopping center. Now, Charity has suggested that after dinner we can look at the sculpture garden that Faith has recently visited, and somehow they discover that the sculpture garden is right behind the restaurant in a low place with a watercourse.

As we start exploring the garden, it turns out this is *not* the garden that Faith had visited; this is Chapungu, dedicated to the display of works of artists native to Zimbabwe.





It's weird stuff, definitely primitive.

I suppose it reflects the state of mind I've been in recently, but as I walk along looking at these statues, I'm not really thinking in terms of them representing a foreign culture, but rather in terms of the multi-culturalists and cultural relativists so prominent in our broken society who insist that all cultures are equivalent. I can't help but compare the art of primitive, native Africa with that of Renaissance Florentines. Sorry to have to say it, but all cultures are *absolutely not* equivalent.



While we are walking around the garden, a light rain sets in, and a rainbow appears in the clouds from the setting sun. Very pleasant. When we're done, we agree to find our dessert at Mary's Mountain Cookies. There are a number of these confection shops in the area,

including downtown Fort Collins and right here at the Centerra shopping plaza, but when we caravan over to the one here, it has already closed for the evening. After a brief consultation with her cellphone, Charity says that the one at the south end of Fort Collins is open late, and so off we go again.

[marysmountaincookies.com](http://marysmountaincookies.com) - Turns out Mary's Mountain Cookies is headquartered in Fort Collins, but has spread elsewhere, not just locally but as far as Denver (there's one on the 16th Street Mall) and even Scottsdale! I'm reflecting that just like Tucson has Eegee's and Lucky Wishbone and Baggins to our credit (and many others, doubtless), Fort Collins can at least claim this one.

After making our selections (everyone else gets ice-cream sandwiches made with the unique cookies, but I get a double-layer mousse-stuffed cookie), I discover that my credit card is not in my wallet. I obviously have left it at PF Changs. This drives the decision of what we're doing first thing tomorrow.

While we were driving up to this Mary's Mountain Cookies shop, Jerri noticed a Hallmark store nearby. We make a mental note to come back and check it out.

## Saturday: Loveland Day 2

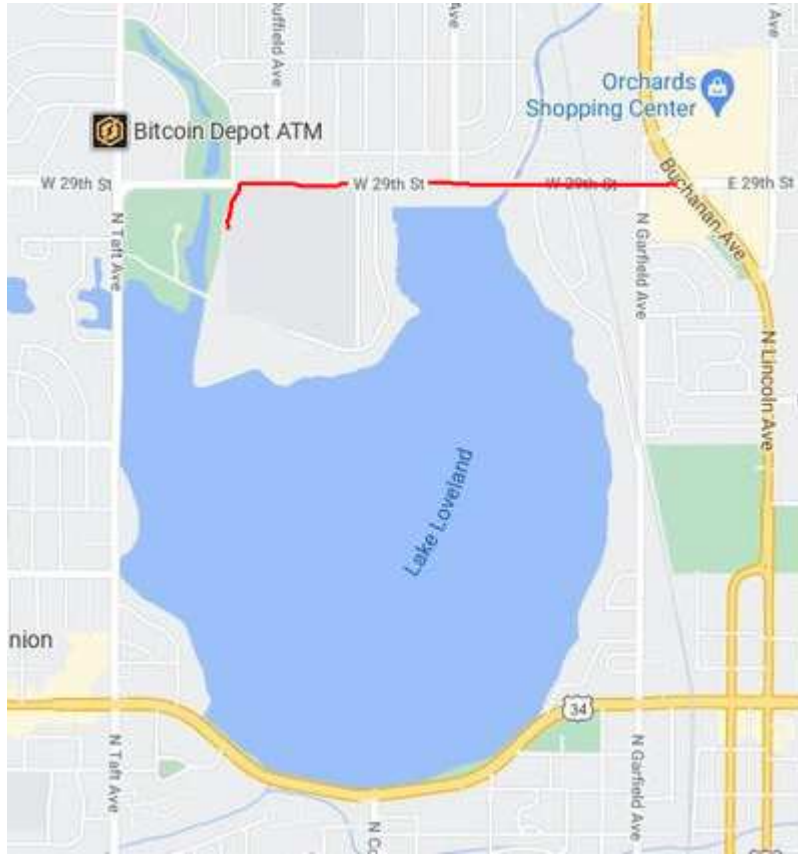
As one drives north on I-25 from Denver to Fort Collins (as we have many times), one sees the billboards advertising Johnson's Corner and their famous cinnamon rolls. These billboards are present as one drives south as well. I've had it in mind to check it out, and being just a few miles south of Centerra makes this too good an opportunity to pass up. [www.johnsonscorner.com](http://www.johnsonscorner.com)

Charity and Faith both arrive at a reasonably early hour, and hang out in the hotel room while Mom finishes her preparations. It's not far to Johnson's Corner, but we are obliged to use the frontage road, considering the (endless) road construction on this stretch of I-25. The girl at the counter tells us it's a fifteen-minute wait, so Jerri and I look around the place while we wait. Yes... it's a truck stop. There's a touristy part of the store, but in the back parts there are automotive items and supplies. And CB radios.

Faith runs out to tell us we've already got a table, so we return to the dining area and look over the menu. There's not a lot of selection, but the breakfasts we order are hearty, with an interesting "German sausage" option, and Faith gets a cinnamon roll as a substitute/upgrade for her toast. It is a large roll, a bit dry, with the white sugary glaze mounded on top and dripping down the sides. It's pretty good. The waitress is telling us how hard work is right now because nobody will even apply for the jobs available.

Overall, the impression for me is that Johnson's Corner is the local equivalent of the Triple-T Truck Stop back home, with cinnamon rolls being their specialty rather than the deep-dish apple pie with a pile of soft-serve ice cream. Now, the apple pie and ice cream is a commitment, while the cinnamon roll is a treat. Additionally, we note a rack of cinnamon rolls at the check-out counter for quick carry-out. I'd say Triple-T is a little more upscale or refined than the very basic Johnson's Corner. The dining area here is very plain, with a minimum of decoration, while the one at Triple-T has pretensions at being a real restaurant.

After finishing and leaving Johnson's Corner, it's just a brief drive back north to Centerra, and yes, my credit card is at PF Changs. It takes a little while for the girls to fetch it from the back office, but soon we are all back in the car heading westward to the sculpture garden that Faith actually *did* visit recently.



Loveland has a lake. Not a decorative water feature like Reid Park "Lake" (and the lake in Fort Collins' City Park is roughly the same size), not an overgrown stock tank like Silverbell Lake. Enough to put boats in. And along the creeks feeding the lake have grown parks. It's the day before the Fourth, so the park is full of picnickers. As we pull into the parking lot south of 29th Street (shared by Loveland High School), I can see a little ride-on scale train chugging around in the park on the other side. Kind of like the train at Scottsdale's McCormick-Stillman Railroad Park, just

rather smaller.

There are sculptures along the lake between the parking lot and the lake, so we look at those, but apparently the Benson Sculpture Garden (that Faith remembers) is across the street.



[www.sculptureinthepark.org/about-benson](http://www.sculptureinthepark.org/about-benson)





Several of the sculptures are interactive, like a bronze bench that you can sit next to the dapper bronze man.

Or hold a romantic minstrel's hand.





Or filch potatoes from a poor fellow's bucket. That's not exactly intended to be interactive, but Faith doesn't let that stop her.

Another "sculpture" that was obviously intended for interaction is a bronze saddle. How this is "art" escapes me, but it is fun. Probably one of the most attended pieces in the park. David takes a go at it.



If Faith had a dolly tied to her hair braid, this could be an advertisement for Lucky Wishbone back home.





It's a lovely park, and we pass at least one picnic in progress. There are paths strewn with sculptures going in all directions, and it would take quite a while for us to see them all.

Of course, I have to reflect on my impressions from the African sculptures we saw yesterday. None of these rise to the level of La Pieta, but then if they had, they wouldn't be in a public park in Loveland Colorado. This is public art, and yet there's an attention to realism in many of the pieces that still hold tribute to the classic Western cultural tradition.

One of the main things I wanted to see to on this trip to Fort Collins was the historic trolley, which operates for a few hours on the weekend. I don't want to run out of time for it, so after walking completely around the watercourse in the sculpture garden, we return to the car and drive back north to Fort Collins. Now, I'm not exactly sure how the trolley works; when the historic trolley was operating in Tucson (and I'm still hoping it will return to the tracks in cooperation with the "Modern Streetcar"), you could board most anywhere along the route and buy a ticket with a couple of quarters from the conductor/driver who could make change from the coin dispenser attached to his belt. To be safe, we go straight to City Park, where it's a sure bet for a place to get tickets. Sure enough, there's a little booth for the "Fort Collins Municipal Railway" just off Oak Street by the tennis courts, where the rails disappear into the grass. I get the tickets (authentic farebox *tokens*, actually), and they have stuff for sale like post-cards which attract Jerri's attention), and I have a brief chat with the man in the booth who is part of the volunteer group that restores, maintains, and operates the trolley. I mention that where we are from, Tucson has rails for the trolley and it used to run, but now has been taken over by an actual "modern" trolley, so the historic trolley cars don't run and the club now focuses on historic auto-buses.

[www.fortcollinstrolley.org](http://www.fortcollinstrolley.org)

The car makes the transit up and down Mountain Avenue about every fifteen minutes. As we step out of the booth, here it comes rumbling softly down the nearly invisible tracks.





Apparently, once you pay for your ticket/token, you can ride back and forth as much as you want. Most of the people get off, but not all, and there's a bit of jockeying by the operators to get as many new riders as possible on board. As was the case back home, when the trolley reaches the end of the line, the operator has to get off and switch booms for the roller contact to the overhead wire.





The restoration job is marvelous. In Tucson, the original trolley cars are long gone, and when they were operating, the club had a Belgian car and a Japanese car. The car we are in now is a Birney car that actually did service in Fort Collins back in 1919. The narrator conductor explains that this is a "Safety" car in that the operator has to hold the control while the car is in motion; if he lets go for a given amount of time, the engines cut out and the car dumps sand on the tracks as a means of emergency braking. I think about asking if they ever do a demonstration of this feature, but decide against it.

It's a leisurely trip along Mountain Avenue, which was the main artery of civic life in the day. The narrator explains how there were shops and grocers and dairy places along the route, and people would get off and get on as their business called for it. Sometimes, the operator would take parcels for delivery. Nowadays, Mountain Avenue is lined with gorgeous homes. "Look for stone facing", says the narrator; "Those are the ones that are historic." The line ends at Howes Street (as close to downtown as it gets anymore". After some discussion, we get off the trolley and get a transfer to get back on the next trolley back to the park.





My original plan was to get off, find a lunch place, and then get back on. As it turns out, it is late enough in the afternoon that there will be only one more trolley transit, and besides, Charity tells us, there aren't really any food places within a couple of blocks from Howes. "Ding, Ding", and there goes the trolley. We sit on the bench at the stop under the leafy trees and look around. To the right (on the north side of the street) there's a Catholic church that must either be preparing or finishing the

daily mass, for the priest is standing out front and a few people are coming and going through the open doors. To the left is the Avery House, a historic home that is apparently available for tours, and there's a banner outside announcing special activities on Independence Day.

While we sit there, since it is already nearly 4:30 and too late for lunch, Jerri and I think that maybe an early dinner with John and Becky would be the best course of action, so I chat with Becky via my (obsolete) cellphone and we make arrangements to go to Longhorn Steakhouse at around 5:30. Presently the trolley lumbers into view and stops in front of us. Unsurprisingly, it seems that people would rather not get off at the go-nowhere Howes Street stop. Fortunately for us, a family of middle-eastern-looking people (women in head coverings) get off and make room for us. We can use our transfer to get back on. After a nice return trip back to the park, we can get in our car and make our way leisurely to the restaurant at Fort Collin's shopping mall.

It's nice to sit to a meal with John and Becky. During our time, they ask us what we've been doing and we tell them about Johnson's Corner. "Oh, no", says Becky, "the cinnamon rolls at Vern's Place are much better". The subject of weather comes up also, and Becky confirms what Charity and Faith are saying about the substantial amount of rainfall they've been getting, and how all the rivers are swollen and the lakes are full. Apparently, what we saw in Loveland today was unusual; the lake is normally sunk below its shores. I'm thinking that it's too bad all this rain isn't falling on the western side of the Rockies, where it can drain into the Colorado River and replenish Lake Mead.

After dinner, Charity takes us on a drive west of town up into the ridges containing Horsetooth Reservoir. She exclaims on how full it is, that in some spots the trees are in the water. We drive out the north end, where the dam and the recreational areas are, and meander back to town through Bellvue and LaPorte in a casual reconnoiter for Vern's Place. I don't know what route we took or how we missed it, but we didn't see it. We resolve to try again the next day.

## Sunday: Independence Day

Once again, Faith and Charity arrive at the hotel and call us down. This time, I've done some free-Wifi research with my (obsolete) cellphone and have located Vern's place. It's a nice drive out there, and we pass another local landmark, the "Me Oh My Pie" shop, in LaPorte proper. Vern's is out in the country, fairly popular, and the lot is almost full, and there's a little bit of a wait before we can be seated out on the deck. Mostly under an umbrella. Glad I've got my new hat. There's a bit more choice for breakfast entrees here, and of course we have to get a cinnamon roll to share. It is certainly more moist, it doesn't really have the heavy sugary glaze, and in the end, the consensus is that Vern's cinnamon rolls are good, better in some ways than the ones at Johnson's Corner, but they're both good cinnamon rolls. As we sit out in the air on the deck with the cottonwood fluff blowing around like midsummer snow and looking up at the ridges just south of the road, Charity and Faith mention that it would be nice to live out here in LaPorte and commute to their jobs in Fort Collins.

[www.vernsplace.com](http://www.vernsplace.com)

What to do with our day? I profer two choices:

- We can see what the Independence Day celebration involves at the Avery House. [poudrelandmarks.org/avery-house](http://poudrelandmarks.org/avery-house)  
It looks like there are house tours, and games on the grounds, and bluegrass bands. People are welcome to bring their own lawn chairs and just hang out. Sounds like a sort of old-fashioned community event.
- We can go to Greeley and look through the Colorado Model Railroad Museum. [www.cmr.org](http://www.cmr.org)  
In addition, Dakota's mother, who lives in Greeley, has said that she would be pleased for us to drop in for a visit and a bite.

In the end, the distance and time involved with a trip to Greeley made the call for the Avery House. We leave Vern's and LaPorte and return to downtown Fort Collins where we find parking in the structure on Mason Street just north of Mountain. After a two-block walk we are at the Avery, and the celebration is in high gear. There is a band under a pavilion in the lawn in the back; they're okay, but they're not what we're used to for even amateur bluegrass bands. Definitely not the Petersens, not even the Pritchards, but there is a small crowd in lawn chairs sitting in the sun and enjoying the music. There are two sets of cornhole games - already occupied. There is even a lawn croquet set - also occupied. There are some posters on stands in the back, and we look over those a bit and take in some informal Fort Collins history. What clinches the deal, though, is a little sign on the front door of the house indicating that it is closed for tours today. With the main attraction withdrawn, interest evaporates, and Faith and Charity return to the parking garage, retrieve their car, and come back to pick us up at the curb.

Friday evening, we had discovered a Hallmark store near a Mary's Mountain Cookies shop. This is a good time to go check it out. After we arrive, Jerri and I go into the Hallmark store while Charity and Faith go into an adjacent T-Mobile store (how this escaped our attention



a few days ago is beyond me). The Hallmark store is more roomy than the ones in Tucson. There's a table with Colorado stuff, mostly Nuggets and Broncos sports knick-knacks, but also a Colorado state cutting board. There's a little comfy nook at the back with some armchairs; never seen that sort of thing in a Hallmark store before. They've also unveiled the 2021 ornament collection ("Christmas in July"). After Jerri makes her purchase, we go next door to the T-Mobile to find the job of updating Charity's phone nearly complete, and her and Faith chatting with the young man doing the job.

At this point, it makes the most sense to go back to the cottage and hang out until the time appointed by Becky for us to come over for Independence Day dinner. Charity orders pizza for delivery while Faith attends to Georgie's needs. Then we sit down and play some games. They've got a small but interesting collection of games, including a card game based on Agatha Christie murder mysteries - "Death On The Cards". It's pretty fun. Then we play Hearts, and Faith manages to not loose (Charity wins). And of course some family conversation. When dinner time arrives, we say goodbye to Georgie and proceed to the Lee home.

There, we meet the newest addition: Allan, a street rescue that Savannah took in. Not a big dog like Sparta or Shoto, not a little yappy dog like Lucy or Sadie. Savannah herself makes a brief appearance on her way out to meet a friend with whom she is going to travel through Utah to San Francisco; they need to plan their trip over coffee. Dinner is country-fried steaks and sausage gravy, followed by a dense brownie-like chocolate cake. John and Becky themselves are not going out to watch fireworks, since they have to stay in and watch all these dogs, particularly Jonathan's dog (who is here because Jonathan is off with a friend at Monument, Colorado (just north of Colorado Springs), in spite of an injured back), but they are pleased to let us borrow some folding camp chairs.

Charity is driving separately, since she intends to hang with Dakota this evening. Once again, we get over to the frontage road instead of getting on the (yes, still) under-construction I-25, and take the left turn under the freeway on into Windsor. We stop at a King Soopers on the west side of town and get some water bottles and snacks for while we sit waiting. Then it's on into Windsor proper and a left onto local highway 257. After a few false turns, we cross the causeway and park on the side of the road behind a long string of other cars parked on the side of the road, get the camp chairs out of the trunk, and walk through the weeds back down to the footpath along the north shore of Windsor Lake. I say "footpath", but there are a few vehicles that drive along this road, to pause and open a gate and drive through and park a bit further along. One of these is a sherriff's truck, and we figure he's going to evict those vehicles, but he just sets up next to them.



There are a *lot* of people out to see the fireworks over the lake, but there is a lot of room, so we are free to play our "I'm Going On A Trip" memory game and chat a bit while it gets dark. Eventually (and later than the advertised 9:30 start time), the fireworks erupt from a point on the northeast shore of the lake - shells and fountains. Very nice. I'm thinking if we had a radio, the committee has probably arranged a musical accompaniment.

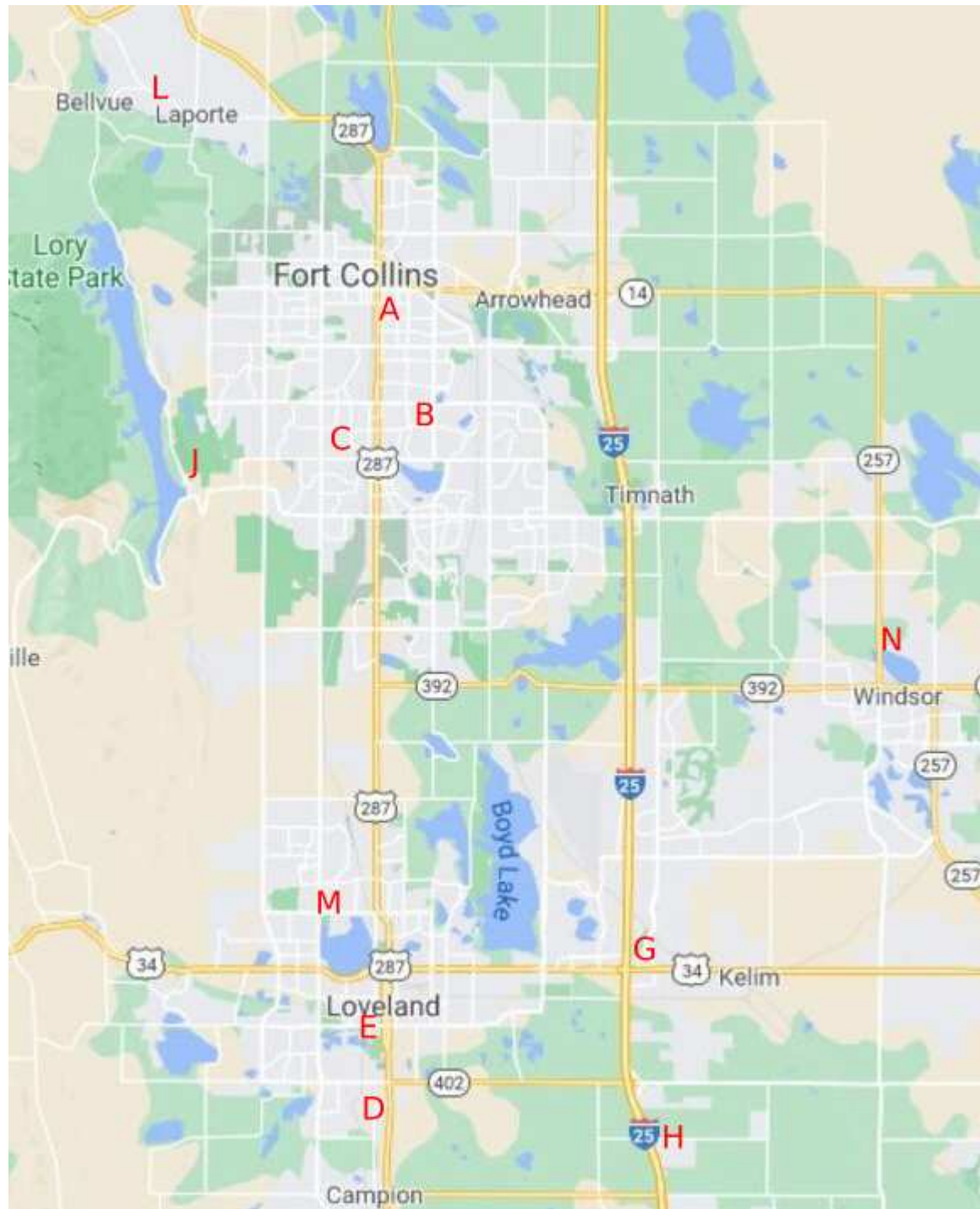


Previously, the launch point had been on the other side of the lake, nearer the city, but this is closer to us. Very nice.

After the show, we fold up the chairs and walk back to the road. Charity departs from us here; Dakota is working for the town of Ault a bit northeast of Windsor. Just before the Windsor fireworks started, we could see other large municipal-scale firework shows erupting to the north, and Charity pointed one out as probably being Ault. Meanwhile, we wait at the portajohn for some relief before returning to town. As I take my turn, I hear explosions and see flashes from outside, and emerge to see the tail end of the discharge of a few more fireworks from the point. As if the committeemen found a few leftovers and decided they wouldn't safely keep til next year.

Traffic is heavy going north, as people are leaving the lake environs in a constant stream. Eventually Faith can pull into it, and we drive for quite a ways until the highway finally ends in a "T". Taking the left side, after a good long drive, it crosses the Interstate and becomes Mulberry. Before long, we are back at the hotel saying goodbye to Faith, whom we will not see tomorrow, since she works, but we will be seeing her in a few weeks as she travels to Tucson to celebrate the imminent birth to one of her expectant school chums.

This would be a good point to review our travels and visits in the Fort Collins area:



- A - Our hotel, the University Best Western, across College from the CSU campus
- B - Charity and Faith and Savannah's cottage
- C - The Lee home
- D - Whiteside's outfitter store
- E - Downtown Loveland at 4th and the railroad
- G - Centerra, site of PF Changs and the Chapungu statuary park
- H - Johnson's Corner, truck stop and cinnamon roll vendor

- J - Drive above Horsetooth Reservoir
- L - LaPorte, site of Vern's Place, another purveyor of cinnamon rolls
- M - Benson Sculpture Park near Lake Loveland
- N - North shore of Lake Windsor, prime site to observe fireworks

## Monday: Return Home

Charity has the day off, and therefore can take us back to the airport in Denver. I thought we had planned things out better, but not good enough. On schedule, Charity shows up at the hotel and almost on schedule, we check out and drive off just a bit northwest of here to Cafe Bluebird, a favorite breakfast spot. Even at 10:30 there's quite a lot of people still here, and we have to park way up Whitcomb Street. Good thing this is summer, or it would be impossible to find parking. There's a fifteen minute wait time for a table. Once inside, we place our orders, and after a typical restaurant response time are served our breakfasts. They are pretty good, eggs benedict and crepes and such, too many potatoes but their own home-brewed hot sauces to put on them. We don't leave hungry.

[www.cafebluebird.com](http://www.cafebluebird.com)

Over breakfast, Charity tells us how she was in the police cruiser with Dakota as they circulated around the district, warning people that the Fourth is over and they needed to finish lighting off their fireworks. There is a hefty fine for setting off fireworks; \$1000 in Larimer County, \$500 in Weld County, but it seems this is more of a club than a revenue source, as Officer Dakota was satisfied to have people assure him they were almost done.

Jerri has bought a gallon of drinking water and a gallon of distilled water for her breathing machine. I'm thinking Charity really doesn't want to have already-opened, unsecured mostly-full jugs rolling around in the back on her return trip, so I recommend she stop at the cottage on the way out and drop them off. Which she does. Finally, we're on the road. Traffic is not bad, get to the turnpike, starting to look like we miscalculated the time. Of course the drop-off lane is clogged, so Charity gets us as close as she can and we hop out, hug her goodbye, and run inside.

This time, I'm smarter about checking in bags, so we don't pay for that. Instead, I get a Southwest seat upgrade. I had gotten a message this morning that our flight was cancelled, and ran down with Charity to the "business center" (in the lobby) to reschedule. Not a problem, but of course we're late on the check-in. Southwest allows you to pay extra to get moved up to the beginning of the check-in sequence; this is as close to First Class as they get.

After getting through the TSA kabuki show and on the train to the concourses, I'm feeling more comfortable. After they start boarding, it's at least ten minutes as they board disabled people, adults with young children, and military servicemen, so we have time to stop to get a bottle of water from a Hudson News shop. When we get to the gate, I find I was right... sort of. The plane is late by a half-hour, so we get to sit in the crowded gate area while the plane lands and gets to the gate, unloads all the passengers, prepares for the next flight, and then starts boarding the early groups. No sweat. We're on the plane and sitting next to each other. No delays with take-off, and soon we are on the way to Las Vegas.

Pretty cloudy out there, not much to see from our window seat. As the descent to McCarran commences and we drop below the cloud layer, we can look down on Lake Mead. Shockingly low; broad stretches of "shore" previously submerged. After we land, we have a couple of hours before the Tucson leg, so Jerri and I look around for a nicer place to eat. Just outside the concourse area is a food court. Jerri gets a Wendy's salad and I can get a Villa stromboli. Mmm! Afterwards, we can sit in the spacious gate area. Jerri discovers that the plug-in for phone chargers doesn't work. I notice that some of the benches with plug-ins have little indicator lights, a sure tell for power, so I suggest we move to one of those benches. On previous flights for work, when I flew through Las Vegas, especially some long late layovers, it was extremely irritating to have the batteries of slot machines going "dingdingding" non-stop. That doesn't appear to be a problem anymore; all the slot machines are now essentially video games. So it's a muted "bloopbleeplap" continuously instead of a "dingdingdingding".

After about an hour, we can board for our Tucson flight. I was telling the kids that flying into or out of Las Vegas at night is a treat if you can see the Strip. Unfortunately, it's not that late, it's not even dark out, and I gambled wrong about the side of the aircraft we chose, and we can't see the Strip at all. So, no treat. Just a quick, uneventful flight back to Tucson, where we get off the plane and it IS dark, and the old 1950s "TUCSON" tower is lit up. Our bags are late getting off the conveyor, and some of the zippers on the duffel are undone and the contents starting to spill out. I know these things happen, but I think this is another sign that it's time to get a new duffel for the bathroom stuff.

A half-hour later, after trudging out to the parking shuttle, getting in the car and paying for the parking, and driving mostly quiet streets, we are home greeting our unappreciative cats at the end of a delightful Fort Collins (but mostly Loveland) Independence Day adventure!

Oh, and just before we left last Thursday... I discovered that Tucson had decided to put on the fireworks show over "A" Mountain after all!