

Ormand Family Activity

July 2017: The Fourth in Colorado

The older child has moved to Colorado ("because they have *seasons*"), up to fairly recently living with her uncle, aunt, and cousins, but she has now moved into a house with some other women. She wants her bicycle, and since we want to see her and her new accommodations, as well as to see my sister and her family, we might as well take a road trip. And, as it happens, July 4 falls on a Tuesday. My company gives us Monday as a holiday as well. And the company has a 9/80 policy (work 80 hours over 9 days) which makes every other Friday an off-work day - and Friday of that week is an off-Friday. As you might expect, most of the Raytheon people are going to take Wednesday and Thursday as vacation days, and get the entire week off. This includes me.

Moreover, when we did our Route 66 tour last year, we stayed at the La Posada hotel in Winslow, a former Harvey House that has been taken over by an artist community for restoration and is operated as a very nice hotel. It seems there is a sister property in Las Vegas, New Mexico - the Plaza Hotel - which was advertised at La Posada. Las Vegas is on the way to Colorado. Usually, we make the trip in two days and stop in Raton, New Mexico. Las Vegas is about an hour south of Raton. This trip will be an opportunity to visit this other historic hotel.

Plus, while Faith gets the weekend through the Fourth off, she has to be back on the job on Wednesday. We solve her wish to see her sister by getting her airfare to Denver and sending her off Saturday morning. She will get to hang with her sister Sunday, and with her aunt and cousins Monday while Charity is at her job.

Jerri wants to sing in the 4th of July musical on Sunday, so we don't leave until after the church service and she finishes packing. Which is fairly lengthy. But finally we leave, and arrive at the New Mexico border in two hours.



Las Vegas is another six hours, and after stopping in Albuquerque for dinner and gasoline, it is after dark before we arrive in Las Vegas. Where a surprise awaits us. Las Vegas has a traditional Independence Day fiesta that runs through the weekend and the Fourth. Traffic through the city plaza is blocked off, and nearly all the roads around it are detoured or converted to one-ways. It takes us a little while and two calls to the hotel for advice before we find a place to park the car.

plazahotellvnm.com



The Plaza has been operating continuously since it was built in 1882. The new owners are refurbishing it and bringing it up to modern standards of comfort (like air conditioning) while retaining its Victorian charm. This is a view of our room in the morning, with the sun streaming through the window on the atrium (sort of; the view isn't very nice, as the window looks

into an interior atrium or shaft, but interestingly we can see the glass roof of the "conservatory" just below).

The halls are a bit labyrinthine, and full of antique furniture. Note the stamped tin ceiling. One of the original Plaza partners was Charles Ifeld, who built his "Grand Emporium" department store next door. The hotel since moved into part of that building, making the hallways even more maze-like. There is a fancy ballroom and convention halls on the first floor of the Ifeld Building.





There are twin elegant staircases rising from the lobby and winding up to the third (top) story, where our room is. Like La Posada, the rooms are dedicated to famous guests. Our room, 317, is the "Romaine Fielding" room, after a successful silent picture actor and director of the '20s, who rented the Plaza Hotel while doing a film.

The next day is an easy driving day (six hours to Fort Collins), so we start it by looking around Las Vegas a little. There are old buildings around the plaza. Here are two with their elegant Victorian-era architecture.





On Bridge Street there are a number of old (and mostly empty/unused) buildings. I don't think this little firehouse functions as such anymore. It reminds me of the Little Red Firehouse in downtown Fort Worth.

Their historic cinema is the Kiva, apparently not used for anything. I hope they can restore this someday like our Fox and El Paso's Plaza.



A view down Bridge Street. There's no traffic due to the road being blocked for the Fiesta. Not much foot traffic either, although there are some interesting shops down here, including the "Blowing in the Wind", with fantastic (and pricey) wind kinetic sculptures.

www.blowinthewind1.com

The blue building appears to be downtown Las Vegas' cinema, with two current major-run films. The place with the cool "Cafe" sign isn't a cafe anymore, or anything else, either; a shame, but at least the sign is intact.



Fancy big wedge-shaped bank building, now the administrative office for their school district.

The town plaza is the site for the four-day Fiesta. There are food trucks and vendors set up around the park. This one has a fun locomotive-theme smoker. The main attraction for the Fiesta is the rotating musical performances in the bandstand. From our breakfast table in the hotel's nice little restaurant ("The Gilded Age") we could see people dancing to the music. As well as some Wild West reenactors in costume.



Before leaving, we circulate the park and try some aquas fresca and

"ribbon fries" (inventive Americans; put a spud in a contraption with an electric hand drill and a vegetable shaver which cuts a long string of "potato chip" which is then deep-fried). Presiding over the festivities is the Plaza Hotel.



Later on, we get gasoline here, and see the depot from the road while trying to find the freeway on-ramp. La Posada is an Amtrak stop for Winslow. This depot is also used for a daily stop on the Los Angeles to Chicago "Southwest Chief" route.

www.trainweb.org/amtrakpix/stationphotos/LAS/las.html

And next door is the Las Vegas Harvey House - the Castaneda, which greeted travelers in an older time. The same people who have restored La Posada and the Plaza Hotel own the Castaneda and plan to restore it as well. Looks like they haven't started, yet. It will be cool when it's done and back in service!



Las Vegas was in times past the largest town in New Mexico, larger than the original Spanish capital of Santa Fe, and larger than New Mexico's current business and tech mecca, Albuquerque. There's much more to this town than we have seen, including the old "Montezuma's Castle", originally a hotel (actually, the third hotel on this site)

providing access for visitors to the local hot springs, and now part of Armand Hammer's "United World College". There are tours on particular dates, so the next time we stay in Las Vegas, we will have to visit this wonder, as well as more of the town.

www.visitlasvegasm.com/10-montezuma-castle-on-the-campus-of-the-united-world-college

An hour later, we are at the top of the Raton Pass and entering Colorado. Later on, we arrive in Denver and meet the entire family (well, less Matthew) at our favorite Italian buffet place, Cinzzetti's. Then it's back to John and Becky's place in Fort Collins where tomorrow's events are planned.



<http://www.cinzzettis.com>



Tomorrow's events start with the Ormands visiting nearby Greeley and their famous "Stampede". A "Stampede" is part rodeo and part county fair. I've been through Calgary, so I know about their world-famous Stampede, but fortunately have not been there during the Stampede and having to deal with the enormous traffic it draws. At least on the Fourth, there's not too much crowd here. We start with their little carnival (much smaller even than the Pima County Fair) with no waiting in lines.

www.greeleystampede.org

The stands at their rodeo grounds are serious. Nothing like the pipe-and-board affair at the Tucson "Fiesta De Los Vaqueros".





By today, the Fourth, the Rodeo is over. Today's event will be a demolition derby. Come to think of it, the Pima County Fair has a little rodeo (some roping, more barrel-riding and other horsemanship trials) and a demo derby, but we don't call it a "stampede".

The "fair" part is pretty small, too, by Pima County Fair standards, although the "food mall" where we get our lunch is pretty decent. Charity elects not to get the "Rocky Mountain Oysters". No real commercial exhibitions, no tractor pulls, no hypnotist or circus act or freak shows. There was "mutton bustin'" for younger people, and a duck race and frisbee-catching dogs, but that was about it. However, the really interesting Greeley thing (not "stampede" related, but in the same place, and we are already here) is their Centennial Village. Several historic Greeley or vicinity buildings have been moved here, some with tours like the Rosson House in Phoenix. One of these was "Rattlesnake Kate's shack, in which a feisty Colorado pioneer woman lived. Once, she and her little son stumbled into a rattlesnake den. She killed 140 snakes, first with her rifle and then with a club. Then she skinned those snakes and made a dress with them, and her fame was sealed.

There were also live animals, like this little friendly cow. Very friendly. Faith was petting it, and looked down to see her shirt hem being drawn into the cow's mouth! Here is Faith with her disgusted face. As life experiences go, this one was fairly benign.



After one of the house tours, the docents were outside introducing visitors to children's games in frontier Colorado. Like these stilts.

And the game of "Grace", in which a young lady would use two drumstick-size rods to propel the little hoop to her friend to catch on her sticks.



In the one-room schoolhouse, Charity has to try on a poke bonnet. I think she ought to get a poke bonnet for keeping the bright Colorado sun off her fair skin around town.

After a few more rides at the carnival, we leave the Stampede as the first drops of an approaching shower fall. There is no rain in Fort Collins, where we dine on hamburgers that Jonathan cooks on the grill, and there's no rain in nearby Windsor, where we go with our folding chairs to the banks of the lake to watch the firework display. It's really very pleasant to celebrate the national holiday with the booms echoing across the lake. The explosions are closer than when we sit at the foot of "A" Mountain - but there is no fire sparked in the gravel pit on the north side of the hill, either.

[I have learned that the vacant lot across from the Augustin Mercado

where so many other folk sat with us to eat the food truck cuisine and watch the fireworks over "A" Mountain is going to be developed. It was already fenced off for this year's Fourth. So there will be no more watching the fireworks from the west side of the Santa Cruz.]

The next morning, Faith and I have to get up early early to set aside one and a half hours for the commute to the Denver Airport and get Faith there at least half an hour before her flight. Traffic on I-25 is slow arriving in Denver, and a bumper-to-bumper crawl along I-270; we use up *all* the margin to arrive at the Departures dock just before her flight starts boarding. Fortunately, she manages to get to her gate quickly, and has a nice flight through Phoenix and back to Tucson.

Returning from my pokey drive south to Denver, I collect my wife and older child for a trip north into Wyoming and Nebraska. Jerri has located a few National Monuments that she wants to visit, and Charity is just glad to spend the day with us.

At the Wyoming border, we see a giant buffalo on the hilltop. The buffalo is the state animal of Wyoming. In Tucson, Phoenix, and Los Angeles, cellphone antenna towers are often disguised as palm trees. I believe I've seen a giant fake saguaro cell tower. In Flagstaff, cell towers are done up like pine trees. In Wyoming, it's giant buffalo.



Crossing into Wyoming. Now *that's* a cool welcome sign!

Our first destination is in Nebraska, which involves a lot of driving across Wyoming to the border. I think Charity is indicating that the Nebraska on the sign is the ground she's standing on.



Our objective in Nebraska is Scott's Bluff, a towering landmark which includes several tall white stone cliffs or bluffs. It was named after a mountain man who was so badly injured in a fight with some indians that his companions had to leave him. When they returned, he of course was dead, so they named the landform in his memory. Being a landmark between Saint Louis and Oregon, it

became a popular stop on the Oregon Trail.

www.nps.gov/scbl/index.htm

Earlier settlers had mule or horse-drawn wagons, or even (the Mormons) hand-carts. Later settlers used ox-drawn Conestoga wagons. I always wondered, from pictures of the Conestoga, where the operator sat, since the front edge of the wagon slopes out like the bow of a barge. It has finally dawned on me; the operator was out front walking along with the oxen to guide and prod them.



It took the CCC workers of the 1930s to build a path to the top of the bluff which the Nineteenth Century visitors never had. Nice view. There is now an actual town of Scottsbluff on the north side, but the Monument's address is in the town of Gering, visible here. Way off to the east, another Oregon Trail landmark, Chimney Rock, can be seen (way too far away for photos, let alone

this small one).

When we arrived at Scott's Bluff, the loquacious ranger in the gatehouse explained that, to get from here to Fort Laramie, we should continue on the main road and to turn "right, left, right, left". Which would have been good advice if the second right had been obvious. So instead of getting to Highway 26, we rolled along state highways that, while not much slower than the US highway, were a lot more windey. It was a pleasant up-close look at the Nebraska and Wyoming farmland and the numerous "corn reservoirs" (as Faith labeled the one we saw at Centennial Village). It's all cropland, and there's no surface water beyond the low-flowing Platte River, so I'm sure it's fed (like Arizona was, and still largely is) from water pumped up from slow-to-replenish aquifers. Doesn't seem long-term viable.

The state highway reconnects with US 26 at the town of Torrington,

where we have lunch. I usually prefer to visit local unique establishments, but the best option is "Broncho Grill House" which looks more like a saloon, so Arby's will have to do. Fort Laramie is just minutes further west on US 26. The first thing we see after leaving the main road following the signs to the Monument is the old iron bridge over the North Platte.



The bridge was put up late in the Fort's service life during the Indian Wars, when the amount of supply traffic to the Fort and the troop mobility required more than the fords, ferries, and small bridges used before.

Like all such, the time came when the old military bridge wouldn't do for modern traffic, and so now a two-lane bypass bridge parallels the old one. The swallows appear to like the concrete bridge for their nests.



It's not a BIG river (by Mississippi or Alabama standards), but it's plenty big enough for Zonies. Three spans. The water currently runs under two, but by all appearances, the river can swell from rains or snowmelt.

Nineteenth Century manufacturer's plaque - "King Iron Bridge & Mfg Co.". King made pre-fab bridge parts, allowing bridges to be put up fast. This Fort Laramie bridge is a rare arch style. Ahh, the days when things could be done fast without a lot of regulation and red tape.



The original fort(s) here were stockades owned by private trading companies, dealing with Indians for furs, particularly buffalo robes. When the movement on the Oregon Trail picked up, and the forts near

the confluence of the North Platte and Laramie rivers were needed for protection of American citizens, the federal government purchased Fort Laramie and converted it to a regular Army post, in which (true to our Western forts) did not require a defensible fortress. The buildings are located where convenient, mostly along a central "parade grounds". After the Oregon Trail died down, gold was discovered in the Black Hills, which by treaty were off-limits to Americans, but the promise of gold was never held back by agreements between tribal peoples and the federal government. The Wars with the Plains Indians followed shortly afterwards. When they ended, there was no need for Fort Laramie, and it was abandoned and auctioned off and left to decay and be pillaged for materials. Since then, the Park Service has acquired it and has been restoring the buildings.

www.nps.gov/foia

At the visitor's center, we also learn another fun fact: "Laramie" (as in the Laramie River, which runs past Fort Laramie and through the Wyoming city of Laramie) is named after a French fur trapper, Jacques LaRamie. Those Frenchies, scattering their names all over the United States, like Chouteau, or Grand Tetons...



This is the outside of a barracks, originally for cavalry. In front are typical vehicles used on the Oregon Trail, including one of those Mormon hand-carts.

Inside is a creditable recreation of military housing of the period. Soldier's equipment hang from pegs or rest on shelves over the bunks - including sabres and the tall shakos or helmets used by the Army around the time of the Mexican War.



The first hospital was down with the rest of the buildings. The second was built up on the hill, a little ways away from the occupied area and closer to the cemetery. I wonder how much the convenience of the proximity to the cemetery figured into the choice of the location.

Officers lived with their families in nice houses. Inside: pocket doors and carved balustrades. Cultural paradigms carry considerable force regardless of where they are taken.





This handsome building was originally the bachelor officers' quarters (BOQ), known (perhaps for good reason) as "Old Bedlam". Subsequently it served as command headquarters and the living space for the commanding officer and his family.

The old guardhouse. Underneath is the common cell for prisoners, including two compartments for solitary confinement. The upper level was furnished for the use of the "guard" - the rotating squad assigned for military alertedness of the post.



As time passed, the rigor of military discipline eased (it was really severe before the Civil War). The post surgeon had condemned the prison facilities in the old guardhouse as being inhumane and unhealthy, so a new guardhouse was built. From the remains of the cells visible under the floor and outside, I can't see how it was much of an improvement.

The surgeon also condemned the sanitary facilities on the post, so a newer company

latrine was constructed behind this building. It drained... into the river.

We finish touring the fort right up to the time it is supposed to close. We leave, back to US 26, and westward to I-25. Charity is driving, and is delighted to see the speed limit in Wyoming is 80MPH. Still, it is dark before we get to Cheyenne, and time for dinner. Guided by some tourist materials from the hotel in Fort Collins, I direct her to the south end of downtown Cheyenne, and we dine at the Wyoming Rib and Chop House. Which I thought would be unique to Cheyenne but it turns out to be a small chain. Oh, well. Cheyenne looks to be very much worth a return visit, not only to see the Capitol (and get a stamp for Jerri's passport book), but maybe to see Cheyenne Frontier Days (www.cfdrodeo.com) - a "stampede" (rodeo plus carnival plus other stuff) with so much more as to completely eclipse the famous Greeley Stampede. Or see "Fridays on the Plaza" (fridaysonthepiazza.com, sounds a little bit like our Second Saturday Downtown, but focused on the music). And stay at the historic Plains Hotel (www.theplainshotel.com). From Lincolnway to the Capitol is only eight blocks. Very walkable. Lots to see and do.

Back to Colorado and Fort Collins in the dark (obviously, this photo was taken earlier, when we stopped to get a better shot at the Wyoming welcome sign). Can't be too late; Charity has to work tomorrow.



So tomorrow Jerri and I are on our own. Almost every time we come up to Colorado, we are inclined to see the Denver Mint. The deal is, tour tickets are available starting at 7:00, and there are a limited number. So early as we can, trying to get there around that time, we speed away to get to Denver in the morning. The fabulous Denver skyline greets us a few miles out on I-25.



Parking can be found in downtown Denver, at least south of Colfax, and while Jerri parks and pays, I hustle over to the Mint to arrive around 7:20 - and find all the tickets are already gone. Tomorrow, Jerri and I will go to the Mint gift shop and learn some things: First, they used to try other methods, such as having people reserve their spots in the tour on-line, but they were having too many no-shows. Second, summer is the worst time to try to see the Mint; people get in line for the tickets starting at *5:30 in the morning!* We aren't going to do that. Third, at times other than summer, when the schools are in session, the demand for tours goes way down. So... maybe we want to experience Denver in the winter? See the Fourteeners with their snowcaps on? And get right into the Mint tour?

So instead, we hike three blocks east to the Capitol. Between the Denver City and County Building and the Capitol, there is a pretty park or mall with gardens and marble structures - and it's infested with live-in vagrants. Tucson has this problem, Phoenix to a much lesser extent; it seems the more leftist a city is, the more tolerant or even celebrating it will be of vagrants living in the urban center and public spaces.

We get inside the Capitol, find the visitors' desk (*not* a visitors' center

and gift shop), sign up for the first free tour and get Jerri's passport book stamped. And then we meet a Capitol volunteer who offers to give us advice as to what to see in Denver. It is obvious he is very proud to be a Coloradan and a Denverite, and he keeps us occupied all the way up to the start of the tour by plotting our day's adventure on the map in the Denver tourist booklet. Wow!



The Colorado state capitol has these characteristic courts or atria with skylights and stained glass that go all the way up and down. Almost all the material came from Colorado.

The Senate Chamber. The fancy chandelier has recently been cleaned and replated. The guide also explains that the room (and the House Chamber as well) had been restored to their early 20th Century appearance from the "practical" and "modern" "updates", like covering the walls with acoustic tile and painting over the skylight. I just find it so amazing that the Mid-Century modernists had so little regard, if not outright contempt, for our history and its cultural, artistic, and architectural aspects.



Looking up into the Rotunda. Not as ornate as the Iowa capitol, but much more light-filled, for reasons we will soon see. The main feature is this ring of stained-glass portraits of famous Coloradans.



Like the Iowa capitol, the tour goes up into the dome. The steep winding stair goes up between the outer dome and the inner rotunda, right past the stained-glass portraits - such as Chief Ouray.

Looking from the top gallery all the way down. The gallery in the Iowa capitol is so narrow and visitors are so pressed against the rail as to inspire acrophobia. Not so here; it's a broad gallery wide enough for people to pass each other and even sit on benches.



Plus, there's no claustrophobia here. Unique to the Colorado capitol dome is a level of tall windows; doors, really, as the frames slide up, allowing access to an external gallery or balcony.

It's a beautiful day to see Denver from the capitol dome. Looking westward over the mall to the Denver Building, and the Rockies out on the horizon.



Jerri poses in the eastward view. Note the Cathedral to the left, with its spires swathed in scaffolding, undergoing restoration. Our volunteer friend told us that on weekdays, when services are not being held, tours go through the Cathedral and see the magnificent stained glass artwork.





The observation gallery is not the highest point! I can't go there, but it's a cool spiral staircase.

Denver is the "Mile High City" because it is exactly one mile above sea level. In fact, the fifteenth step of the Capitol is exactly one mile above sea level. Except, as the tour guide informed us, the state more recently allowed some UC students to re-survey, and they found that it's actually the 18th step!





Jerri stands on the 18th step, with the inscription on the fifteenth step in the view.

Here's a pretty good view of the Capitol from the southwest. I think we're done with it now, after two visits. We also learned that originally, the dome was plated in copper. Why copper, in Colorado? But they discovered that it tarnished quickly and turned green, so they replated it with gold - from the mines at Cripple Creek. I don't quite get this, since the Arizona Capitol dome is (of course) sheathed in copper, and I've never heard of tarnish being a problem.



Following the advice of our volunteer advisor guide, we walk a few blocks west and one south to the "Molly Brown House". We had seen it on the map on our previous visit, and drove past it in the dark, but there was no stopping, as the streets were choked with parked cars of nightlife seekers. Now, during the day, with parking already out of the way, we arrive to find the availability of a tour.

There are so many things we know about Molly Brown that just ain't so. Her name was Margaret; nobody called her Molly, that was a later theatrical development. Yes, she was of Irish background, but there was no stigma to that in a Denver high society that was just forming. She wasn't a gold-digger; her husband got rich off the mining industry after they were married. Her house is *not* a "mansion"; it's too small, it *doesn't* have a ballroom (it seems other Denver historical persons who ought to know better think it does), and they bought it used. They didn't live in it much because they traveled so much. Yes, she survived the sinking of the *Titanic*, because she was traveling alone and was one of those



"women and children first" who got a seat in a lifeboat. Yes, she was a suffragette, and much more a feminist beyond that, something she seems to have imparted to her daughter. She was later separated from her husband (but not divorced; they were catholic). Likely he had had enough activism. She died in New York, teaching classes in a women's acting school. Her children didn't seem to have much character, and they didn't care much for their house, which they sold after they inherited it for far less than it was worth. After being a boarding house for years and gradually deteriorating, the city was going to have it demolished but then the Historic Denver organization (historicdenver.org) stepped in to save and restore it. In the end, I took away the impression of an interesting but sad person.

The extensive itinerary set for us by our volunteer tourism guide goes well beyond the time we have today if we are to return to Fort Collins for dinner and quality time with family. He advised lunch at the cafe outside the History Colorado Center, which we do, late in the afternoon. There isn't enough time to do much more today, so we head back to our parking lot near the Mint.



The Denver Central Library has western art exhibits in the upper stories. We can't see those today, but we do see a Totoro in the library window.

The next morning of the last day of adventure in Colorado we are faced with a decision: Do we go back to Denver, or do we go up into the mountains, to the Rocky Mountain National Park or Estes Park? We decide to return to Denver and pick up a little more of yesterday's itinerary. It starts at the Mint's gift shop where we learn that sometime other than summer may be better to see it. It then continues at the Byers-Evans House, another historic home in the Capitol Hill district.

William Byers produced the first Denver newspaper, *Rocky Mountain News*, in the fledgling city, and he built the house. John Evans was the governor appointed to the Colorado Territory by President Lincoln, and his son William bought the house from Byers. I read this as a happier story than the Browns', as the house was expanded to accommodate more family, and was occupied by family



into the late 20th Century at which point the house was deeded to the city and now operated by the History Colorado organization (different than the Denver History outfit of the Brown house, and apparently the same as the museum). Most of the furnishings are original, and the tour is quite good.

<http://www.historycolorado.org/museums/byers-evans-house-museum>

Then, after another lunch in the same museum cafe, we spend the rest

of the day in the History Colorado Center. The volunteer guy said there was a room with a big map on the floor and you can carry some appliance (like a tablet) to points on the map and learn some facts about that area. Well, we saw the map, but there was no indication of information appliances, and there was too much museum to spend much time on it. The next exhibit was a recreation of the abandoned eastern Colorado farm town of Keota which died when drought and low demand for ag products killed the dry-farming household farms. There was a story of how ski jumping was introduced to the States from Norway at Steamboat Springs, and there was a ski-jumping simulation (which we didn't try, alas). There was a big exhibit how most of Colorado's water comes from snowmelt in the Rockies, and how Global Climate Change is threatening this and the resultant extinction of many mountain animal species (how did the world survive the many worse warming periods in the past?). There was also a sizeable "history of Denver" area. We had to rush through the last few areas before closing time.



On our way back to the parking spot, we found this nice little water sculpture, recalling the much more elaborate park in Fort Worth.

Saturday is the day we leave back home, but since we aren't going any further than Albuquerque, we have plenty of time for breakfast with Charity at Cafe Bluebird (www.cafebluebird.com) on the north edge of the CSU campus. We thought it was pretty good. Then an easy drive back south, stopping for lunch and gasoline at Trinidad, including a brief pass through the downtown (I always like the historical downtown areas of small cities like Trinidad, and wish I had time to walk around and see them up close).

Moments after leaving
Trinidad, we are back in
New Mexico.



We got to our hotel in Albuquerque and walked to dinner at Denny's. On the way, we see a feral mommy cat and her two carbon-copy kittens near the sidewalk, but they disappear before we can grab one to take home with us. Probably a good thing.



Later the next day, we are passing through Hatch, New Mexico. Tucson has a Paul Bunyan on Stone and Glenn. Flagstaff has a giant Louie the Lumberjack. Seems Hatch has a Big Juan selling RVs.

We reach Deming for lunch quite a while after the time for lunch. We continue from state route 26 to Gold Avenue and into their historic downtown where (somewhat desperate) we stop at a no-name taco place in an old storefront. It wasn't great cuisine, but it wasn't bad. An interesting experience. I'm not positive I would spend much time in Deming's downtown area, but they do have a cute little town plaza.



I-10 in New Mexico has a few well-advertised tourist-trap truck stops, operated by Bowlins. I suppose the redundant billboard approach inherits from Burma-Shave.

Back into Arizona. But the adventure isn't over yet.





Arizona has our own famous roadside attraction, something like "Rock City" in Tennessee. But not as classy. And that says a lot. But there's a Dairy Queen there.

Evidence that we are indeed at "The Thing". We look at the tourist trap junk and tee-shirts, and yes, we get some DQ soft-serve for the road. But while we are here... we might as well see this wonder (again). There's actually more to see than The Thing; some antiques and lots of tree root polished and painted up with monster faces, and a silly medieval torture cell. But the last thing to see...



David gazes in awed terror at the sight. What is it?

You will have to go yourself and find out!