

Ormand Family Activity

August 2013: Historic Arizona Route 66

About two years ago, we were in Flagstaff either visiting or depositing our children at Northern Arizona University, and like we usually do, we were looking around the town at what there is to see. We went by the Visitor Center in the old train station and happened to notice a display for a "Route 66 Passport Program" on the counter. We picked one up, thinking that someday we might trek the part of Route 66 that goes through Arizona. Since we have spent ourselves to the nub, there won't be any elaborate vacation trips this year, so we decided that the day for the Arizona Route 66 tour had arrived.

- Website for Arizona Route 66 Passport Program:
www.azrt66.com
- Useful travelogue we used for selecting things to see:
www.theroadwanderer.net/route66AZ.htm

Besides, the timing is just right. Charity will have just returned from her Ireland trip, school starts in just over a week, and there's some furniture we need to tote up to Flagstaff prior to Faith moving into her new apartment. So there's just enough time for a week-long road-trip, and we need to go to northern Arizona anyways. It's settled, then.

Thursday - Starting Point

The first decision is, do we start at the eastern end or the western end, and how do we get there? We start by contemplating a trip up the Colorado, stopping at Lake Havasu City and maybe seeing the miniature lighthouses along the shores (yes, we *will* do this, too, someday), and actually, except for this stop, this route would be shorter and faster than going up I-17 to Flagstaff and then west on I-40. However, since this also would entail us dragging Faith's furniture along for more than half the trip, we decide to do the direct thing of going to Flagstaff first. I suppose having started contemplating a trip up the west side, we never really considered starting on the east side, and while I don't regret the trip back along the east side (as will be described later), we might could have started on the east side, ended on the Colorado, and spent a solid visit to Lake Havasu City on the return. And visited those lighthouses. To the enduring delight of our children.

So up and over it is. We start later than I'd like (as per usual), and even though our stop in Flagstaff is limited to dropping off the furniture at our rented storage unit and going by the apartment office to check on arrangements, it is early evening by the time we get to the California border. Now it happens that the "town" on the Arizona side of I-40, and the "official" end of Historic Arizona Route 66 on the west side, is

Topock, but in reality it is nothing more than a place name. Significantly, there is no lodging. There is a website dedicated to "Topock 66 Resort", a hotel and restaurant and marina, but when we actually call to make reservations, they tell us that the hotel part is a future phase of construction! So the end of our first day of travel is in Needles, California, the closest place to Topock that we can get.

Years ago, the Ormand family had gone on a trip with our camper, and for whatever reason we stayed overnight at Needles. The KOA Kampground was close to the river, there were swarms of stinging flies, and it was so smoking hot that sleep was hard to achieve. I remember the misery to this day (funny how the miserable is often the memorable). Well, Needles was still just as smoking hot as I remembered, it being mid-August, but the hotel stay was quite pleasant, compared to being in a tent camper with five other people!

Friday - Topock, Oatman, Cool Springs

The next morning, we went in search of the "water recreation" opportunities promised in the Topock literature, specifically somewhere we could swim in the Colorado River, just so we could say we did. We crossed the border three times before we figured out that the only place available was "Pirate's Cove" on the California side.

- piratecoveresort.com

Here are three bathing beauties in the River. Or rather, in a harbour behind the "peninsula" (large sand bar?) visible in the background. It seemed that swimming was an unusual activity; mostly, people were launching their motorboats here. In spite of the duck poo in the remada where we dumped our stuff, and the bank of submerged river weeds about twenty feet out from the waterline, we achieved our goal of swimming in the Colorado River.





Also visible in the above photo is a beautiful little sea plane moored out in the harbour.

After we get out of the water and change back and look through the Pirates' Cove general store, we are done with California and ready to start the Route 66 stuff. Here is the official start of the journey: The Arizona State Line on the west side.





The above sign is of course on I-40. Immediately across the border is a ramp to Topock and Golden Shores, and it is this road that is actually Historic Route 66. Until it rejoins I-40 at Williams, Route 66 continues to exist as a separate roadway, Arizona Highway 66.

Other than the name "Topock" and the marina part of "Topock 66 Resort" (which we actually see), the place is significant only for the railroad bridge and the old auto bridge. This beautiful structure is that auto bridge (actually the second Route 66 bridge over the Colorado), known as the "Old Trails Bridge". Since it was a one-lane bridge, it wasn't practical as the volume of traffic continued to grow, so it has been replaced, but the bridge continues to serve by carrying a gas pipeline across.



Leaving the Colorado behind, we drive on toward the first "real" stop of Oatman. The stretch of desert between the river and the Black Mountains is the most desolate, blasted bit of landscape you have ever

seen, nothing but volcanic scoria and clumps of cholla cactus. The road winds into the mountain pass, and abandoned mines are visible on the hillsides. Before long, buildings start to appear, and soon we are driving slowly into Oatman.

Slowly because the road is packed with wandering burros, and other cars trying to get around them. An old mining camp that would have otherwise become a ghost town like so many others here, Oatman prospers as a Route 66 destination due to the burros and the high character-quality shops in the old storefronts. Except for the asphalt road, Oatman looks much as it did when the mines played out in the '30s.





The burros are the descendents of the animals used to haul ore from the mines. They get lots of petting from visitors like these two, and lots of feeding, too. We didn't feed them, but there's an industry here to supply burro munchies to tourists. The animals can be temperamental, but we didn't see anything unpleasant

happening other than one or two cars who left their windows down, and some burros stuck their heads into the windows demanding treats from the occupants!

The other thing Oatman is "famous" for is their July 4 "fry an egg on the sidewalk" event. We missed it. Really, though, Oatman isn't as hot as Tucson, or anywhere near as hot as Phoenix or Yuma, but they claimed the "hot enough to fry an egg on the sidewalk" before any other city did.





Lunch was in a cafe, where Charity was surprised to find her NAU Theatre classmate, Haley Yuhasz, whose grandmother owns and operates the cafe, so Haley finds summer employment, and probably quiet times, in the not-very-active town of Oatman.

Another thing Oatman is "famous" for is that Clark Gable and Carol Lombard spent their honeymoon in the hotel. It isn't a hotel anymore, as far as we can tell, but rather an ice-cream and confections shop, but the sign is still hanging over the street.



After seeing everything worth seeing and buying way too much stuff, we are done with Oatman. The road continues to wind through the mountains, but it is Route 66 and better maintained; it is paved, the hairpin turns are not too bad, and so it holds no terrors for veterans of Highway 88 from Tortilla Flat to Roosevelt. We also pass a mine being actively worked, judging from the cars and trucks parked inside the fence - undoubtedly a gold mine.



Before finishing the windey road from Sitgreaves Summit to the plain, we come across another significant Route 66 feature: Cool Springs. It used to be a filling station, but not any more; it is just a tourist spot. So we do the tourist thing and stop to look it over. It is really a tribute to the Route 66 Resurgence, as Cool Springs was a pile of

rubble and standing walls just a couple of decades ago. The owners rebuilt it after it was used in a scene in *Universal Soldier* starring Claude Van Damme. No, we haven't seen it. No, we are not likely to.

As we approach our next destination, and our stop for the night, I notice that Kingman is dabbling with "green energy". I can't imagine they get anything worthwhile out of five turbines, other than some degree of credit for trying.



Saturday - Kingman, Hackberry, Truxton, Peach Springs



The night is spent at El Trovatore Motel, closer to downtown and more Route-66-y than the chain hotels further up the road. The owner is a talkative older man, very proud of his Kingman home and his historic property, which, he explains, was started by the same wealthy Italian immigrant who built the first Las Vegas hotel (which is apparently still operating, in altered form, on Fremont Street). The owners are passionate about old movies, and many of their rooms are decorated per some celebrity. They are also very proud about having recently reactivated their neon tower sign.

- eltrovatoremotel.com

Our room is *not* a celebrity shrine, which is fine. It's an older hotel, and the rooms are a bit unusual by contemporary standards, but comfortable. Perhaps the oddest feature was the bath. No tub, just a tiled shower room - the knobs were on the opposite end of the stall from the nozzle, and there was no light.





El Trovatore prides itself on its extended wraparound mural, the "longest Route 66 map in the world". The mural is still being extended.

Part of the mural calls attention to the Kingman Airfield, which played a significant role as a training base in WWII.

Note that the airfield mural piece is hanging on the fence of the swimming pool. Which was under repair and not usable. I noted the other Route 66 character hotels had working pools.



To start our visit to downtown Kingman, we look over the massive locomotive in their railroad park. Kingman is above all things a Santa Fe Railroad town. Here are some tourists for scale comparison; I think this machine is considerably larger than the old Southern Pacific locomotive at the railroad depot museum in Tucson.





A silly drama unfolds in Kingman, as the dastardly Simon LeGree ties fair Penelope to the tracks. Will our hero arrive in the nick of time to save fair Penelope from the Santa Fe train as it thunders toward her, and foil the dastardly Simon LeGree's plans?.

One of Kingman's many points of pride is the Powerhouse, the first poured concrete building in the west that in times past housed the steam-driven generators that supplied electricity particularly to area mines. The building now contains the Visitors' Centre and the excellent Route 66 Museum.



- www.gokingman.com

Among the historical exhibits of the formation of the Mother Road was a diorama of some pioneers rolling down the Beale Wagon Road toward California. The archtypal Conestoga wagons with the canvas awning were for the family possessions; the family itself walked beside it. Including, apparently, pregnant women.



An interesting story - apparently the Mohave Indians who lived along the Colorado River were not merely a peaceful agriculture tribe; in the early days of the pioneer movement, a group of settlers were attacked as they approached the river, and they *walked all the way back to Santa Fe* to wait until the U.S. Army could take care of the problem.



More history: After Route 66 was established, it was used by swarms of Oklahoma refugees fleeing the "Dust Bowl". However, California didn't really appreciate all these impoverished people flooding their state, and most of the Okies were turned back at the border. Makes me think how Arizona could turn back the swarms of

rich NIMBY liberals who have ruined the Golden State with their quixotic political theories.

Sharp eyes will notice that this old Ford truck, supposedly bearing the family of Okies... has an Arizona license plate!

We visit the Kingman railroad station. It still operates as an Amtrak station (the waiting room is at the west end, visible here), and there is a Hertz auto rental office (I've always wondered why train stations don't do more to provide rental car opportunities to railway travelers), but mostly the building contains the



Kingman model railroad club. We look it over; the setups are quite nice, and there are some display cases with railroad antiques and memorabilia, and some history displays. While looking around, I get involved in a conversation with a club member who came to Arizona from California years ago to participate in "fighting the atom bomb" - he's a peacenik, of course, and he held other inconsistent liberal philosophies which I chose not to probe.



Right across the street is the Hotel Beale. In better years, this was the main hotel in Kingman, the best available for railroad travellers. It seems that the demise of the railroad as a major passenger service has affected the Hotel Beale, and now it is a

crumbling mass of abandoned storefronts, graffiti, and vandalism. I hope that someday they can restore to hotel to new purposes, since the Hotel Beale corresponds exactly to Tucson's Hotel Congress, which is doing very well indeed.

Adjacent to the Beale is the Hotel Brunswick, which has been (at least partially) refurbished as a bed and breakfast hotel. Had we not been doing the Route 66 thing and searching for characteristic Route 66-style motels, I think we would have stayed here.



Of course, if we had not been doing the Route 66 thing, it is unlikely we would be visiting Kingman at all

After seeing the sights of Kingman along the railroad and the Route 66 road, we go north a block into downtown Kingman proper. There are many antique shops, cafes, and thrift stores. We have our lunch in the excellent Siren's Cafe (www.sirensinkingman.com) (Siren = mermaid), which turns out to have been listed as an Arizona Highways Best Restaurant a few years back. In one antique shop, we got to talking to the owner, who, to our amazement, actually WAS a "girl from Winkelman"! She knew all about Winkelman and Hayden and Dudleyville, and some of her family is buried there. She had some real Arizona stories. Unfortunately, our girls were unimpressed (and they saw Winkelman with their own eyes just a few months ago, on our Canyon Lake/Apache Trail trip).



Kingman is the seat of Mohave County. Here is their beautiful courthouse. Not quite as pretty as our own Pima County courthouse, but like ours, still functioning as a place of government.

To the east side of the courthouse is the old County Jail, built at the turn of the 20th Century. I suppose it is too small to house today's prisoners. Other than the "historic landmark" plaque, there is no indication that the building is open for tours.





Interesting notice painted on the side of the jail. I wonder what circumstances prompted this county law? Prisoners coordinating jail breaks with their cohorts on the outside?

Just before leaving Kingman, we look at the Bonelli House, across the street from the courthouse. There are tours of the house on other days of the week, so all we can do is look at the outside: Wraparound verandas on both levels, and an observation cupola on top. Very pretty, but I'm thinking there's more to the story that gets this place, out of all the other old homes in the city, mention in the Route 66 Passport booklet.





Next stop:
Hackberry!
Ordinarily, there is a classic Corvette under the roof, but since it rained just before we arrived, the owner had moved it to its garage. Outside and inside, it is a welter of antiques and kitsch that marks all the classic Route 66 sites.

Lots of funny stuff in here. We keep bumping into this Kalijah guy. Over his head is a section of interior wall with Route 66 traced out, and pins and badges from visitors from all over the world. As we leave, since it is a "general store", after all, mom gets her usual fistful of postcards, the young women get snacks, and I get a bottle of "Route Beer". There's a real industry catering to the Route 66 tourists!



The next stretch of our journey is a little confusing. The next site is Valentine, and there are things there we want to see, but we will be arriving too late to see them. The original plan was to stay at Truxton, just a few miles from Valentine, but we discover the motel in Truxton is no longer operating. So we choose to go on to the Grand Canyon Caverns to spend the night, and then backtrack to Valentine.



The motel in Truxton may not be operating at the present, but it is still a "historic Route 66 site". It is also for sale. There probably isn't enough Route 66 traffic for a hotel in Truxton to operate, being just a few miles from Kingman, and having *absolutely nothing else* around; no restaurants, no shops, just a convenience store

with a gas pump. I suppose in earlier days, Truxton might have been more significant, since Route 66 isn't a high-speed interstate highway, and there wasn't anything else really between Seligman and Kingman.

As it is, the Truxton motel is just a "Historic Route 66 Site" and a marker on the old Beale Wagon Road. And it's for sale. And the location of what looks like a perpetual Indian yard sale.





Further down the road is Peach Springs, the "capital" of the Hualapai Indian tribe. There's a resort-class hotel here (a bit on the pricey side, and not strategic to our visits tomorrow), and a nice-looking restaurant (which we don't actually patronize; more

tomorrow). Mostly, it is an information counter and a place to stage your white-water Colorado river rafting expedition. I also find out that what I would *really* be interested in - as a true-blue, red, and copper Arizonan: a visit to the spectacular Havasupai Falls - is not managed or even much acknowledged by the Hualapai tribe. Well, maybe there's a reason for that (after consulting the Arizona tourism map): Supai is on the Havasupai Indian reservation, not the Hualapai, even though the road to Supai departs Route 66 on Hualapai land. But that will be another trip for another time.

Finally, we arrive at our destination for tonight - the Grand Canyon Caverns Inn. It has been raining all afternoon, and there is a delightful coolness and rainsmell in the air. The classic motel-style rooms are comfortable, but there are no refrigerators, microwave ovens, and no Internet service.





There's also no restaurant - the place here at the Caverns closed at 6:00. The only options are the restaurant at the Hualapai Lodge, way back in Peach Springs, or on ahead in Seligman. We opt for the second choice - and are very glad we did, as we get to experience the Roadkill Cafe! Of course, there's no actual roadkill, just

funny menu entries, and the food is excellent.

Sunday - Grand Canyon Cavern, Valentine, Seligman

After some discussion, the plan for today is to see the Caverns, since they have tours every half-hour, but the animal park in Valentine has only three during the day, and it would be a stretch to get back there in time for the morning tour. So we have a bit of time this morning to have our breakfast and see the Caverns.

Before starting the day, we pay the bill at the motel office, which includes a little convenience shop. In the back of the shop is an unmarked hallway to their little nostalgia museum. Which includes an '80s tribute including one of Jerri's favorites - Star Wars!





It would seem the owners of the Grand Canyon Caverns are trying to position their property as a family camp type arrangement. There is a rodeo arena and a stable for horse riding (but no horses are available). There's an RV campground. There are hiking trails between the Caverns building and the hotel. This little totem pole is near the start of one of those hiking trails.

- www.gccaverns.com

Up at the Caverns building, there are other family-camp type things, like a "pan for gold" sluice. There's a "dope on a rope" display, showing how early visitors to the caverns would be lowered into the entrance on a rope from a windlass. And there's this dinosaur. Of course there are dinosaurs; dinosaurs are from millions of years ago, just like the caverns. The message is insidious and persistent.



Time for breakfast! The "restaurant" resembles nothing so much as the dining hall at a campground. Well, except for the creepy "grammie" set up to greet customers (or drive them away?). There was a lot of self-serve here, like having to fetch your own orange juice or coffee, and your plastic service ware, and your syrup and butter packs, which just reinforced the camp impression. But the camp thing fell apart in that we were the only dining party there.

No visit to a major tourist attraction would be complete with a fakey tourist photo. If you need help finding her, Charity is at the very bottom.



The noteworthy thing about the Grand Canyon Caverns is that it is a "dry cave". The water action is long gone, and there are no significant stalagmite and stalagmite formations. It is, in fact, one of the largest dry caves in the world, after others in China and Australia. But it may yet pass those, since exploration has discovered other, even larger chambers connected with these that have been visited since the 1800s.



When we first resolved to visit the Caverns on our Route 66 tour, we discovered that there is an underground hotel suite. Well, that would have been pretty novel, and I was seriously considering it, until we discovered the price: \$700 for two!!! This is that hotel suite. Just out in the cavern chamber.

When the lights go out, it is totally dark. Hearing the echos. Not to mention the awareness of being a hundred feet underground. And as is often the case, they have ghost stories. No, thanks.

Next to the "hotel suite" is a little concert theatre. They didn't really say much about this. They did mention that they've had weddings down here, and up on the cavern walls are the remains of tossed bridal bouquets, preserved in the dry air.





Another unusual feature of these caverns is their use by the federal government as an emergency fallout shelter. These provisions have been stocked here since the 60s, enough to keep 2000 people alive for six weeks. There are cardboard cylinders intended for sewage waste - and the guide pointed out they are the same

size and shape as the potable water containers. And he pointed out another significant omission from the emergency supplies - no candles or matches or flashlights or batteries. No light sources! Imagine sitting down here for up to six weeks with your 2000 friends and neighbors, being unable to tell the difference between the water containers and the waste containers, or even what food packages you are trying to open blindly. Another instance of official government screw-up. Good thing they were never needed.

Near the original entrance, the explorers had found the remains of a giant ground sloth that had fallen in, broken her back, and had clawed the rocks in her vain attempt to climb out. The University of Arizona (not University of Tucson, as our tour guide mistakenly stated) accepted and identified the bones, and sent back this reconstruction.

There was also a dessicated bobcat that was found down here, which had fallen in and broken some bones and died. The dry cave preserves stuff, being pretty much devoid of the foods for bacteria to survive, that normally cause decay.



This suspension bridge rises up to where the original entrance used to be. At the beginning, visitors were lowered into the cave by ropes ("dope on a rope"), carrying their candles. Then the owner, who had made friends with the workmen building Hoover Dam, just up the road, got some help in installing a ladder (a *long* ladder)

and this suspension ramp, designed by an interested engineer. We left the caverns via a wooden staircase that was also built by those Hoover Dam workmen using leftover Hoover Dam lumber.

But the ramp goes nowhere, now. Also in the cave, the owner found remains of two "cave men", and he added those "cave men" to his earlier tours. But the "cave men" were found with saddles - they were

the remains of some Indians who had fallen in and couldn't get back out. Even after learning this, the owner continued to show them off as "cave men". When the Caverns changed hands, the new owners returned the remains to the tribe, who buried them nearby. Well, this made the original entrance to the cavern an "Indian Burial Ground", which the new owners felt obliged to honor by filling in the original entrance. This seems utterly unreasonable to me, and destructive of a natural wonder. But I'm just a tourist.

We have now seen the Grand Canyon Caverns and the underground hotel suite that we missed out on, so we return to the surface, get in the van, and backtrack on Route 66 to Valentine, the home of Keepers of the Wild animal refuge. It seems there are a lot of people out there that come to own exotic animals, particularly dangerous animals, and the law permits this... to a point. If lions and tigers kept as photo props turn 18 months old, they are regarded as "too dangerous" and cannot be used as props anymore. Owners that think they can handle their huge Siberian tigers and learn (fortunately short of fatal) that they can't don't want to keep them anymore. There are also a lot of trafficking in exotic animals that have to go somewheres. Keepers of the Wild is one of those places where these animals go. So it's not really a zoo or an animal park (like *Out Of Africa*), and the visits that tourists pay for are intended to raise money for the care of the animals.

- www.keepersofthewild.org

Charity's favorite animal, who seems to like pulling a towel over his head. Monkeys are a favorite of the animal traffickers.





Sultan is a rather old lion, judging by how long his mane is. We learned that there are places that accept animals like lions and tigers that are too old (like, more than 18 months old) for private owners to keep them, and have lotteries for would-be big-game hunters to come and hunt and shoot them. This sounds scandalous, but I'm not sure that

the scandal isn't our social conditioning at work. Not sure what to think of this, objectively. Of course, I'm glad Sultan escaped that fate. Here, Sultan is handed a meaty snack by our tour guide via a gripper, which shows off his fine points better than the other method of pitching the beef or chicken chunks over the fence.

Lots of tigers. Tigers love water, and compete for time in the water tank. We also learn that none of these animals were associated with circuses or "wild animal" shows, who are regulated by federal law and are required to take care of their animals who are too old to perform.



Other animals: Llamas, emus, coyotes (I can't imagine how these qualify as "exotic"), a grey wolf, a cougar, a jaguar, several bobcats, a lynx, a lemur, several raccoons (also not exactly exotic), a donkey (ditto), some land tortoises, and several different kinds of monkeys. There were also a house for birds, but we didn't look at those. The entire tour took over an hour. When we exited the gift shop, the thunderclouds that had been gathering started to rain.



One more thing in Valentine - the Indian School. Now closed. I was thinking this Indian school was in the same class of program as the Indian School in Phoenix, where the purpose was to get the young Indians away from their tribal lands and train them to be functional in the larger (European-derived) American culture. However,

upon reflection, *this* Indian school is in the Hualapai Reservation, so maybe there was something else going on here. There are other dwellings in the area, so I'm guessing this *is* Valentine, and therefore the School may be closed but isn't "abandoned" and subject to neglect, decay, and vandalism.

We are now done with our backtrack. Back through Valentine. Back through Truxton. We stop in Peach Springs at the Hualapai Lodge for lunch, and we see that they offer take-away sack lunches for their outdoor adventurer guests, so that's what we get, and eat them in the car. Back past Grand Canyon Caverns. And back to Seligman.

We stop at the Road Kill Cafe briefly, so Faith can squash a souvenir penny for her collection. Just outside the west door, which we hadn't noticed on the previous visit (because we had used the east door) was this fakey-looking "jail"...





... but the sign outside seems kinda legit. Awful lot of reasonably sounding details, with actual names. Maybe it was for real...

Seligman really gets into the Route 66 thing. For good reason: Angel Delgadillo is the man behind the drive to reinvigorate the remaining bit of old Route 66 that was bypassed - but not replaced by - I-40, between Topock and Ash Fork. Delgadillo ran this roadside diner and ice cream stand, and then handed it off to his



son. The younger Delgadillo is quite famous for his humour. After we got our milkshakes, he asked, "Do you want straws with those?", and held out a fistful of paper packing straw. I paid with cash, and he tried to hand the change back... to my kids. As we left, he said, "Oops!", and squirted a fake mustard bottle on Charity - the kind that blows a yellow

string from the spout. Very silly. The small area around the service window is enclosed (not unlike some Dairy Queens), and completely papered with business cards from passing visitors.



The Snow Cap from across the street. When we got here, there was a pair of tour buses and a sea of French, German, and Japanese-speaking tourists.

Angel Delgadillo was originally a barber living in the small town of Seligman. This is his original barber shop, not completely converted into a Route 66 memorabilia shop. The foreign tourists were so thickly packed in here that we couldn't even get inside at first, so we continued on up the street.





When I first saw the mention of The Rusty Bolt in my online researches, I thought it would be a tavern, but no, it's another Route 66 tourist shop. This stretch of Route 66 is pretty thick with such shops... and they all have pretty much the same merchandise. James Dean, Marilyn Monroe, and Elvis Presley seem to be the icons of Route 66.

An oddity of the Rusty Bolt are the collection of mannequins set up in poses, mostly on the porch roof. Charity chills with an artificial cool dude.

And it was educational. My children did not know what an Edsel was. Of course, I had really only read about the famous dud car model, and here is a real one. Apparently road-worthy. Needs a bit more restoration work.



There's not a lot more to Seligman, at least not for tourists, so we leave, intending to continue travelling down Route 66. The lesson for tourists is, you have to be very careful about watching the road signs. I thought we were going down 66, but ended up on I-40. The problem with interstate highways is, there is *no way* to turn around. We had to go almost to Ash Fork (20 miles) before finding an off-ramp - which turned out to be where Route 66 reconnects with I-40! So we drove all the way back to Seligman on Route 66 (reading all the Burma-Shave signs coming), and then turned around and drove all the way back to Ash Fork (reading all the *other, different* Burma-Shave signs going). By the time we got to Ash Fork, the Visitors' Centre was closed. Not too much of a loss; just that Jerri didn't get another "optional" stamp for her

passport book. The most interesting thing about Ash Fork is, that's where Arizona State Historian Marshall Trimble comes from. Ash Fork is also the "Flagstone Capital of the World", and we saw about three lots full of pallets of large sheets of red sandstone.



We get to Williams fairly late, and check into the nice Best Western hotel. For tonight, it's not going to be a Route-66 characteristic motel for us. The desk clerk is very helpful, and provides a map of downtown Williams and some

recommendations for dinner places. We find that Williams really comes alive at night, with lots of neon and storefront windows blazing. The shot with the little cheapo camera doesn't do it justice. Dinner was at an Italian bistro that claims to have been a Philips 66 station, and had some old-style gas pumps in the patio, where we dined. Very pleasant. Afterwards, we walked up and down the street a bit, and went through several of the tourist stores. There was even a zip-line ride, set up in the lot where we parked. It took a while to figure out what the "whizzing" sound over our heads was.

Monday - Williams, Bearizona, Grand Canyon

The next morning, we return to downtown Williams to hit another one or two shops that Jerri saw the previous evening. Walking up the street from where we parked, we pass an old stage theatre. Outside the theatre, Charity makes a friend. Faith is amused at her sister's antics.



Williams bills itself as "the last Route 66 town in Arizona to be bypassed". Of course, it is primarily famous for being the terminus for the Grand Canyon Railroad. We left our car in Williams many years ago when we took the railroad up for a few-day visit to the Canyon. I could do that again.

Williams is also the jumping-off place for

the main road to the Grand Canyon, Arizona Highway 64. Jerri has another hobby of collecting stamps from national parks in her National Parks Passport book, and since it is just an hour to the north, we intend to leave Williams by that route.

There's another northern Arizona attraction outside of Williams on our route, that gets advertised in Flagstaff and up our much-traveled I-17: Bearizona. This is primarily a drive-through animals in their (more or less) natural settings. After paying our entry fee and being warned to keep the windows rolled up and the doors locked, we pass through areas for bighorn sheep, donkeys, buffalo, and wolves before we get to their chief attraction...

... the bears. There were lots of these big animals, all doing their bear things (like scratching their backs on tree trunks; *not* just a Disney fiction), and some, like this fellow, sitting quietly right beside the road.



- www.bearizona.com



The other part of the park is a set of enclosures like at the zoo. This one held five feisty cubs chasing each other around and roughhousing, apparently unaware of the crowd of humans being entertained.

Charity saw a badger in Ireland this summer. We saw another one here in Arizona... in more controlled circumstances.





More bobcats. Or actually, these are Canadian lynxes, same thing. But here in Arizona, this pair could be Wilma and Wilbur (yes, even here in Lumberjack Country).

The last thing at Bearizona was the bird show, prominently featuring raptors who the trainer sent flying to posts in the rear of the audience and then calling them back. The fun thing here is, these birds are accustomed to flying low to take advantage of the "ground layer" air effect... and Jerri was right in their flight path. She felt the brush of falcon and owl wintips several times! Then, as if it had just been waiting for the bird show to end, it started raining, and after we exited the gift shop, in earnest. We had to run for the car. And drive up north through come-and-go rain showers.

We arrive at the national park and follow a long line of cars through the gate - including some pink jeeps filled with tourists wearing rain slickers and not looking all that happy. After stopping for a bit at the "Canyon Village" area to get Jerri's stamp, we continue on to the historical area. My objective is to have our (late) lunch at the El Tovar dining room.

The first thing to greet us was the sight of the old Santa Fe station, where we debarked from the train several years ago. These two girls were small back then, and have no memory of this place.





We get to El Tovar, but too late for lunch. The hostess suggests that the Bright Angel Lodge is still serving lunch. Better luck next time. Still, it was a treat to walk along the rim to the Lodge for a delicious meal, followed by poses at the wall overlooking the Canyon.

Arizona's great namesake attraction and Natural Wonder, under cloudy monsoon skies.



We are amazed at how many foreign tourists are up here. After passing through a few more gift shops along the rim, we are ready to leave. My thought was to take the "scenic route" from Valle directly to Flagstaff past Mount Humphrey and the Snowbowl, but this is a Route 66 adventure, so we really have to return down the same road to Williams

and pick up I-40 to Flagstaff, and the night's stay at our traditional hotel, the Pony Soldier Best Western, which happens to be a Route 66 characteristic motel.

Tuesday - Tourist Traps, Winslow

There's nothing really Route-66-ish to see in Flagstaff that we haven't already seen, so we just pass on through down Route 66. Once again, I miss a sign, or it wasn't there, maybe, so we go up Highway 89 a long way before we resort to the GPS navigator to get us back down through Winona to I-40. This means there is still a stretch of Route 66 east of Flagstaff that we still have to drive down before we can honestly say "we've done Route 66"!

East of Flagstaff, there are fewer towns along old Route 66 than there were on the west side of the state, but there are more historical "tourist trap" attractions. Most of these are now defunct. Like Twin Arrow. We have to park on the shoulder of an off-ramp, climb past a barrier wall, and walk down a bit of weed-overgrown asphalt (doubtless the original Route 66 roadway) to get to a graffiti-plagued abandoned rest stop.



But the giant arrows that advertised the rest stop are still here, and clearly maintained. Photographic evidence that Faith and Charity were there at a historic Route 66 "tourist trap"!

We note that the new "Twin Arrows" attraction is an Indian casino north of the highway. We find out later that the Navajo operate the new casino, and the Hopi intend to refurbish the historic site someday.

Another old attraction is Two Guns. Just an abandoned gas station and KOA Kampground (here in the middle of nowhere). My children are inspired by the setting to pull two "guns" on me.



To the east, there's a stretch of dirt road to some stone buildings that are probably more parts to the Two Guns site. Again, doubtless, that stretch of road is the original Route 66.

Another "tourist trap" is Meteor City. Abandoned, but in reasonably good condition; maybe the Hopi can reactivate this one, too. Another significant northern



Arizona attraction is Meteor Crater, south of the highway on the road just next to the old Meteor City roadside stop.

The next objective along the Mother Road is the town of Winslow. Entering the town, we see the Visitors' Centre in an old building that turns out to have been that part of the Hubbell Trading Post operation near the Santa Fe tracks. The other part is on the Navajo reservation, near Ganado, and is a National Historic Site. Our original intent was to take a detour up to Ganado and see the historic trading post and get a stamp for Jerri's book, but this is rather a long way up and back. It will have to wait for a future visit.

Of course, the famous attraction in Winslow is the "Standing on the Corner" park, since Winslow was immortalized in the Eagle's song "Taking it Easy". The tourist shops around the intersection play the soundtrack or the video loop endlessly.



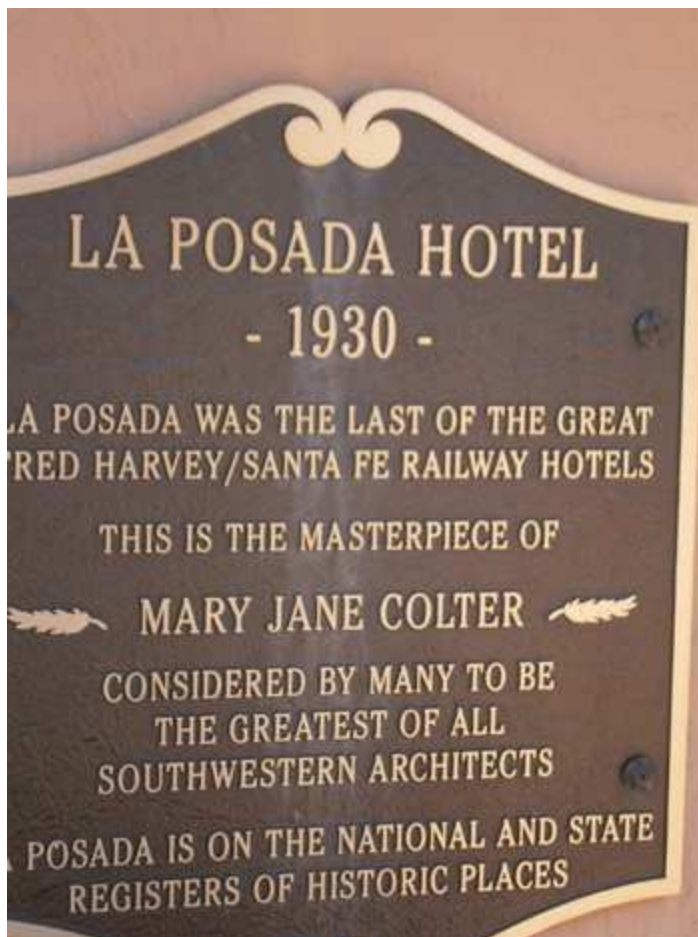


Here they are, three girls standing on the corner next to the bronze songwriter.

Special mention to the little Winslow Historical Society museum, just a block north of this intersection on the right hand side. Excellent small collection, and two knowledgeable ladies running it.

The other significant attraction in Winslow is La Posada. Here we are at the street-facing gate. On the other side of the building is the railroad-facing gate at which the rail travelers would enter. I'm not sure this means that passenger trains would stop right at the hotel. I suppose they could; it wouldn't be that much noiser than the trains passing by at all. It's still a working hotel, and the Santa Fe is still a working railroad. Something for potential overnight visitors to consider.





The sign says it all. From what we learn inside, Ms. Colter was a bit of a perfectionist, and La Posada was her baby, which didn't always sit well with the workmen.

There is a pretty nice self-guided tour via a pamphlet, and tourists are warned away from the areas of the hotel used by paying guests. This still leaves all the common areas, the restaurant, and the garden. It is a shame that the building has gone through so much after its heyday - for a while, it was used as the Santa Fe office, and a lot of the beautiful hotel fixtures were removed and lost, and the only memory is recorded in the photographs. Many famous people stayed here, including John Wayne.



I had it in mind to have our lunch here. Instead, however, we essentially went across the street to the "Brown Mug", which is perhaps a misnomer, since it was a Mexican food joint. Very local, very colorful, reasonable food.



Winslow has a movie theatre! Two movies playing.

On the east end of town, as we are leaving, we see a little park area, featuring two beams from the 9/11 Twin Tower disaster.



Just north of Winslow, about two miles from town, is Homolovi State Park, site of some India ruins claimed as ancestral by the Hopi. I am

glad the Indian state ranger at the Visitors' Centre greeted us before I said anything - I was thinking it was "How-mow-LOW-vee", but she said "Hum-AW-luh-vee".



There appear to be four sites, two of which are under active archaeological excavation and two are open to public visitors. Honestly, all these flatland Indian dwellings look the same; some walls, and a few kivas in varying states of preservation. Probably the best preserved or reconstructed Indian dwelling is Tuzigoot,

near Camp Verde.

The ground is simply littered with little ostraca from centuries of broken pots. Of course, if everyone took them, they would soon all be gone - and the Hopi would be mad at us. Touching and looking are fine, though, and it's clear that someone - rangers - have made little piles near the path for the convenience of visitors (and to keep them from going off the paths).





Between Winslow and Holbrook is the Jackrabbit Trading Post. Of course we have to stop, and here's the tourist-grade photo to prove we were here.

Unlike Twin Arrows, Two Guns, and Meteor City, Jackrabbit is a living "tourist trap". Their sign isn't quite as iconic as the twin arrows, but it is at least maintained, as opposed to Two Guns or the Meteor City stop.



Right next to Jackrabbit is the town of Joseph City. As you might have guessed, this is a Mormon town - the oldest in Arizona. So claims their historical plaque. Which also describes something that we read about in the Winslow historical museum - when the Mormons were migrating into Arizona, they planted settlements with fortifications - "presidios", with a wall and a couple of towers. The one in Winslow actually incorporated stones taken from the Homolovi ruins. We didn't see the remnants of any of these Mormon fortified towns; an idea for a follow-up vacation expedition. But Joseph City outgrew the need for their fort.

One of the high points of our Route 66 adventure is to partake of a truly legendary Route 66 feature - the Wigwam Motel.



The funny little wigwam rooms are actually decently sized, and quite comfortable. The bathroom is a bit odd, however, and like the El Trovatore in Kingman, there is no bathtub, but rather a built-in and tiled shower stall. Unsurprisingly, no Internet service.

As we are getting settled, the most unusual event occurred. A caravan of about fifteen vehicles with Michigan plates drive up into the parking lot, and a swarm of Chinese tourists emerge and start taking pictures of everything. The vehicles all had the same Chinese-script liveries on the sides... and decals on the aft hatch of a Red Chinese flag! So they were mainland Chinese tourists traveling in a group (probably so their "keepers" could watch them).

Holbrook is significant for having the only right-angle turn in the Arizona stretch of Route 66. On the advice of the motel manager, we take that turn and go north into the more contemporary part of Holbrook looking for a dinner place, and end up... in a Chinese restaurant! By the time we get back, the Red Chinese tour caravan is gone.

Wednesday - Holbrook, Petrified Forest

Next morning we are up, prepared, and ready to take our tourist-grade "yes we really were there" photo. Heartily recommended - fun, comfortable, and inexpensive.



And we are among the last guests to leave. You couldn't tell this by simply looking at the parking lot, because there are several vintage cars parked around the lot for flavour.

Holbrook is close to the Petrified Forest. Arizona is a rock collector's paradise. Hobrook capitalizes on this. The Rainbow Rock Shop is famous, mostly for its collection of concrete dinos. Again, this linkage between rocks, millions of years, and dinosaurs. The dino statues must be popular; while walking around the Wigwam, I discover that at the room next to ours, a baby dino was peeking from behind a shrub.



More infamous is the old Bucket of Blood Saloon. It is not active, but it is unmistakably here - the beam over the door still says "SALOON" just like the period photos. It didn't always have this name. At some point, two cowboys were shot dead in an argument over a card game. After the bodies were removed, the floorboards were

so stained that someone casually observed that it looked like a "bucket of blood" had been poured on the floor. The name stuck.

Holbrook is the seat of Navajo County. The newer county buildings are still here, near the more contemporary part of town, and the old Courthouse is now the Visitors' Centre, Hobrook museum, and Route 66 nexus. The main point I take away from the museum is, Holbrook was Way More the "Wild West" town than Tombstone!



Of course, being the courthouse required some place to hold the prisoners. The jail room contained a steel facility with the cells, bunks, and interior cell doors and exterior unit doors.

Charity visited the jail on our first visit. We got directions to a breakfast diner uptown, and then came back afterwards. The good ol' boy museum staffer led us to a theatre room and started a video about "Route 66 Ghosts". Probably because Holbrook and the Navajo County Courthouse were featured. Seems there was a railroad worker, George Smiley, who had an argument with his foreman over pay, and shot him in the back. Smiley was the first (and maybe only) capital criminal to be held in the new courthouse jail. After his execution, "his" ghost has been detected especially in the jail. After learning this, Charity could not re-enter the jail.



A better story was a young woman who was incarcerated for some crime, and hung herself in the jail. "Her" ghost is also present. At one point years later, a Courthouse museum worker had driven past with his family in the car and noticed an upstairs light was on. He went in, looked around and called to see if anyone were there, and then turned off the light and went back out. His family insisted that there was indeed someone in there, because they had seen a shadow of a person standing at the illuminated upstairs window.



We went upstairs ourselves, didn't see any ghosts. The courtroom is kept in the same condition it was last used. The rest of the room is filled with pew-like benches. Apparently in earlier days, the large courtroom served as a social events place - until the judge ended the practice because the dances were "getting too rowdy". This is

Holbrook.

In the museum was this painting that used to hang behind the bar of the Bucket of Blood. There are two bullet holes in it. Once is center-left, in the lake just left of the island. The other is between the tallest tree on the island and the tree to its right. This is Holbrook.



One of the things I knew about northeast Arizona, from reading Zane Grey novels, was the significant influence of the Hashknife Outfit. I learned that this was an essential feature of Holbrook. The museum man told us how the Aztec Land and Cattle Company drove a herd to Arizona to sell to local ranches and businesses. Turns out the animals had Tick Fever, and had to be destroyed. But the rambunctious Hashknife cowboys (which included more than a few outlaws) made their presence known in various violent ways. After returning home, I did a bit of research and found that the Aztec Company purchased a large tract west of Holbrook and operated a ranch for many years, so it

seems the Hashknife Outfit was a chronic rather than acute plague.

The legend lives on! The sherriff's civilian auxiliary call themselves the Hashknife Posse. Many years ago, some Posse members rode from Holbrook to Phoenix carrying an invitation to the governor to some significant Navajo County event, and the Hashknife Pony Express was born. Now it's an annual event, and the Pony Express is certified by the U.S. Postal Service to carry mail from Holbrook to Scottsdale. There's a special cancellation stamp that is quite the collectible item.



Things were bad enough in Holbrook that the county hired a man for sherriff, Commodore Perry Owens, a courageous and impetuous gunfighter. He once served a warrant on the father of the Blevins family (who was wanted elsewhere as well). A gunfight ensued which left three Blevins men dead (including his 16 year

old son) and one wounded. Hey, the OK Corral shootout was more or less even odds; this was one against four and the one emerged unscathed! Western novel stuff, here!

Nowadays, things are more civilized, and the character of the Blevins House is much different.



I think between the Wigwam Motel and the stories from the Navajo County Courthouse, Holbrook was the high point of our Route 66 adventure. There's more to do today - a little ways further east is the

Painted Desert and the famous Petrified Forest National Park. Time for Jerri to get another Passport book stamp.



There are two parts to the Painted Desert. The smaller part is north of the Interstate, and is pretty much just Painted Desert. Not far on the road from the Visitors' Centre is the Desert Inn, built long ago as a "tourist trap". In time, it developed severe structural problems, and the owners turned it over to the Park Service, which

stabilized and fixed it up as a park attraction. Apparently, it's main claim to fame is having been used as a location for the film *Harvey Girls* starring Judy Garland.

It wasn't really an "inn", it was a soda fountain and cafe. It has been restored pretty much as it was in its heyday. Too bad it wasn't a functioning cafe. Still a pretty place.



The main part of the Painted Desert park is south of the Interstate, and includes the Petrified Forest. And some other features, like yet another Indian ruin that has been reconstructed a bit.



The primary aspect of the Indian site is the collection of petroglyphs. This one serves a practical purpose: The adjacent rock has a split in it, and the Indians put the indicated mark just so the light from the sun rising on the Summer Solstice would fall right on it.

Really, though, petroglyphs are just *grafitti*. It's very old grafitti, and new visitors are not (anymore) allowed to add their own, but it amuses me that the scientists always have to interpret these as cultic or otherwise deeply significant.



There are many turn-offs to see different deposits of petrified wood. There is a stiff penalty for trying to take any away, and the rangers at both gates can search your vehicle (but they weren't doing it this day). As a former lapidary, I know petrified wood shines up pretty good, and some bits are better, more

colorful than others. These were pretty colorful, but very weathered from centuries of exposure on the surface.

Some of these logs were really big. Of course, the official story is that this was an ancient forest that was covered and the wood petrified; when I see the logs, I see trees that were torn up from wherever they were growing by the Noaic Flood, deposited in some eddy or confluence of currents, and covered rapidly by flood sediments. Not millions of years. Of course, the Visitors' Centre had dioramas of dinosaurs supposedly concurrent with the millions of years age of the Petrified Forest.



Another famous feature - Agate Bridge. Just a petrified log that was undercut by a gully. Now reinforced from beneath with concrete. Jerri vaguely recalls being able to walk out on the petrified log bridge. Now, it is verboten... but there are no rangers around to

enforce the rule! We were good...

We went pretty much everywhere that didn't require a lot of hiking. This was at "Blue Mesa". I think the classic "Painted Desert" features were more clearly seen here than in the northern part. Note that this is not stone, it is colored mud, clearly largely volcanic ash.



We have had a pretty good look at the Painted Desert and Petrified Forest - and most importantly, Jerri got her stamp. We move on down I-40 / Route 66 toward the eastern end. We will get there tomorrow. For tonight, since there really are no towns of any size at all till Gallup, New Mexico, Jerri has made reservations at a Days Inn at Chambers. Turns out that most of the I-40 overpass bridges on this end of I-40 are under construction. I miss the Chambers off-ramp, obscured by traffic barricades and warning signs. We have to go way down the road to find a working bridge where we can get on the other side of the freeway, go back past Chambers to another working bridge where we can get back on the east-bound side, and then carefully get off at Chambers. Chambers, as far as we can tell, is really just a wide spot in the road. So many places along the southern edge of the Navajo Reservation are like that. As a consequence, there is no place to dine anywhere nearby but at the restaurant connected with the motel. The Indians are missing out on an opportunity here.

Thursday - Navajo Trading Posts, Lupton

The next day is our final day on the road, that we will finish our Route 66 adventure and return home along the eastern edge of our state. As previously mentioned, there are no towns or such between Holbrook and Gallup. There are, however, a fair number of "Indian Trading Post" tourist traps." We stop at pretty much all of them.

Geronimo's was closed, but we could look at the "world's largest petrified tree stump" in their kitschy garden.



Another "trading post" is "Fort Courage", reminiscent of the fictitious Indian Wars army fort from the television show "F-Troop". Of course this place had absolutely nothing to do with the television show, but the suggestion draws in the tourists. Or at least, the ones who remember "F-Troop".

The departure of '60s

popular culture from contemporary memory may explain why "Fort Courage" is run down. There used to be a motel here, and the towers were open for visitors. Now it is all closed down, overgrown, and decaying.

But Jerri visited here as a child. She is back as an adult. But she is unlikely to ever come this way again. Is that sad? Not really...



At last, we reach the New Mexico border at Lupton. We have travelled all the way across Arizona along the path of the Historic Route 66!

Interestingly, while there is a "Route 66" sign on the west end, I didn't see any on the east end. Lots of other signs. Mile 0 marker. Like Topock on the other side, there is no visible evidence of Lupton. There's not even a river. The start of Historic Arizona Route 66 on the east end is just where Interstate 40 crosses an imaginary state boundary line.



And, the official "Entering Arizona" sign on the east side of the Copper Star State.

There *is* actually a bit of Lupton at the border - another "Indian Trading Post". Other than the merchandise inside, here's the clue that Route 66 is here - the iconic Chicago to Santa Monica route map...



... next to what they claim is the "world's largest teepee". All those wooden cigar-holding Kalijah Indians we have seen along the way? This "trading post" specializes in tobacco products!

That's it! We did it! And now to get home. The plan is to go south along the eastern edge of the state, through the Apache Sitgreaves forest on the "scenic highway". This means going back and finding the mostly under construction overpass bridge that puts us on U.S. route 191. After an hour of driving, we reach St. Johns, a little (mostly Mormon) town where we have lunch in a little mom-and-pop cafe. We had to take a detour around "downtown" St. Johns, as there was apparently a traffic accident, and the police had shut down the road through town! I see some official-looking Apache County buildings; surprisingly, the map says tiny St. Johns is the county seat!

The Return Home

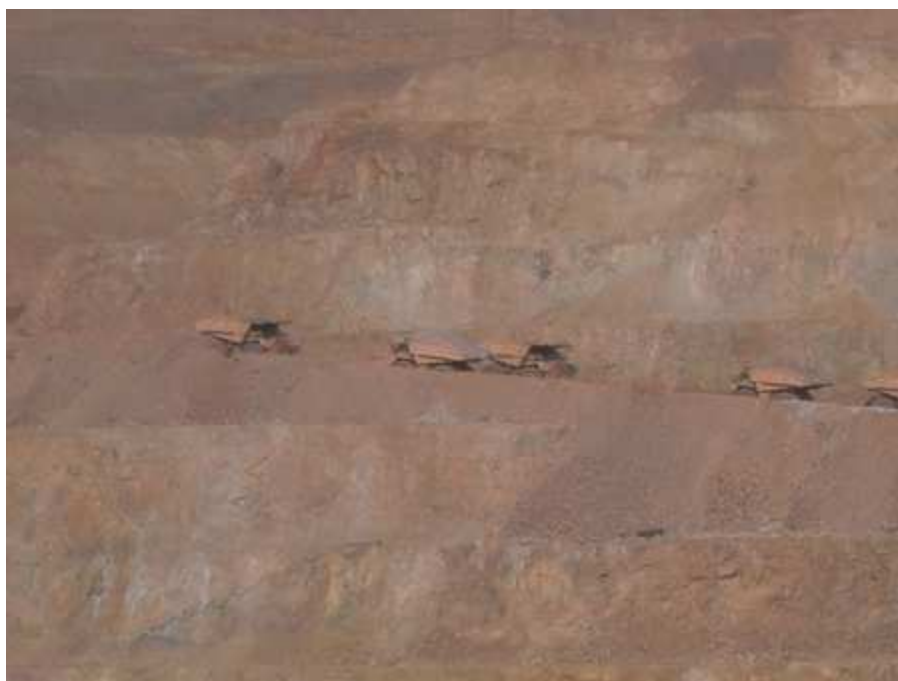
Our trusty GPS navigator guides us through town back to 191. Just outside of town is Lyman Lake State Park. There are some camp sites, but not much else besides two boat launch ramps. It seems Lyman Lake is special for not having any restriction on the size of boat. Which is a difference without a distinction, as it is so far away from anywhere that there would be very little point in dragging your big "Baywatch" cruiser all the way to Lyman Lake.



After Springerville and Eager, the road approaches, then enters the White Mountains. Very easy road, very lovely landscapes. Lots of dead or dying pine trees; we are wondering if the tree-bark boring beetle is responsible. Eventually we pass by the Arizona mountain vacation preferred destination of Hannigan Meadow. Then, on the downward, southern side of the mountains, the true nature of the "scenic highway" manifests itself - very, very windey, hairpin turn after hairpin turn, very tight, with a maximum safe speed sometimes as low as 10 MPH. And no guard rail between the road and the steep mountain slope. And almost no turnoffs. Fortunately, there's also not much traffic on a Thursday afternoon. At one rare turnoff, we stop and look at a breathtaking White Mountain vista:



We are all of us quite relieved when we finally reach the feet of the mountains. Driving down a canyon, we see the vast tailings of the Morenci Mine looming ahead.



There's a lot of activity in the mine this afternoon. The shovels are all busy scooping ore into the trucks, there's a line of loaded trucks going up the ramp and another line of empty trucks coming back down for more. It is amazing how the scale of the enormous

open-pit mine dwarfs these three story-tall trucks.

Up to now, over the decades, the waste material has been piled around the mine as tailings.

Interestingly, there seem to be movement to dump the waste into the bottom.

Here's one of those mammoth trucks dumping its load on a growing slope at the bottom of the pit. I wonder if they've reached the bottom of the ore body and are now starting to fill it back in.



Arizona is the Copper State, and the vast Morenci mine has contributed a lot to that legacy.



We finish winding around the mine pit to the processing works on the south side. It is apparently quitting time, and there's a line of cars getting back on the road, going home to the company towns of Morenci and Clifton. Morenci is fairly contemporary, what we can see of it, rows

of houses perched along the terraces of what probably was once mine excavations. Clifton, however, is an historic mining town, built along a canyon. Bears a repeat visit. The last time I was here, many years back, the town was almost deserted, but now the place is booming.

Leaving Clifton behind, we proceed to Safford, where Jerri's mother was born. We spend the next hour or two driving around, back and forth, with her talking to her mom on the cell phone trying to piece together recollections of street names and landmarks. In the end, we give up. It will take some "research" at home to come up with better location candidates and then come back to check them out. That would be okay by me; that would be the opportunity to revisit Clifton, and take the "scenic route" from Safford to Globe - which also calls for a closer look.

What a beautiful state. So many things to see and do. And now, we have "done" the Route 66 thing!

The following week, we return to Flagstaff to install our children at the University. Part of the itinerary for this trip is to take our now-completed Arizona Route 66 Passport Book to the Visitors' Centre and receive our certificate. It is now official:



Final Update: Early October we go back to Flagstaff to see Charity in

her NAU play. We sieze the opportunity to actually follow Route 66 out the east side to where it reconnects with I-40. We are now *really* done!