

Earl's Diary - Tuesday - May 7, 2013

Dear Loyal Readers:

Today is a sightseeing day. We are still in Albuquerque and have plans to visit some very interesting sights. Before leaving our RV park, we partook of a continental style breakfast provided by the park. We had our choice of cereals, donuts, bagels, yogurt, juice and coffee/hot chocolate. It was quite filling.

[Warning: This diary page may contain more information than you may want to absorb. If so, just look at the pictures and skim past the "teacher's information".](#)

Alan and Michele invited me to spend the day sightseeing with them. Boy! Did we see the sights! We left the park at 8:45 heading for Petroglyph National Monument. It was a beautiful sunny start for our walking among the boulders of the park. We stopped at the visitor center to gather information. Here's what we found out about the petroglyphs:

The geology of the area shows the remnants of volcanic eruptions of 200,000 years ago. The basalt from these flows caps the sandstone of the Santa Fe Formation. As the softer sandstone erodes away, the basalt breaks off and tumbles down the hillside. This action provided the escarpment where the petroglyphs were carved.

After thousands of years of exposure to the elements, the boulder ridge, created by volcanic eruptions some 150,000 years ago, developed a dark layer of clays, minerals, and organic material called "rock varnish." Artists pecked through the dark outer layer with a sharpened stone, exposing the lighter interior and giving contrast to the images. Rock artists also created petroglyphs by holding a sharpened stone against the rock surface and hitting it with another stone, piece of bone, or sturdy hunk of wood.



Boca Negra Canyon is a 70 acre section of the 7,236 acres within the monument boundaries. Approximately 200 petroglyphs can be viewed here.

My buddy Alan had a better way of saying this than I ever could. Thanks Alan for letting me plagiarize your work! "The paleo-Indians scratched through the patina to expose the un-oxidized rock beneath. The thing ****I**** want to know... how do we know that these things aren't just the result of some juvenile delinquent paleo-Indian? I mean... just because it is OLD doesn't make it important. It **COULD** be the equivalent of some kid with a can of spray paint. Just saying."

We spent about 1 1/2 hours exploring among the rocks before moving on to our next destination.





Our next stop was in Old Town Albuquerque. As we entered the town square I suddenly remembered I had been here once before. It was about 15 years ago when Patricia and I met her sister Carolyn and her daughter Joan for a mini-family reunion. No wonder it looked familiar!

We had plenty of time to walk around the central plaza. We visited several shops (for just looking). My Impulse Buying Filter was engaged, so I didn't buy anything. I did get my picture taken with a wooden Indian! We saw lots of STUFF. It was interesting to note that most of the items were made in China. I guess we visited



the wrong shops! We did note that the Native Americans did have their wares displayed on blankets along one of the sidewalks.

In the historic section of Old Town, ancient Indian and Spanish cultures come to life through old churches, quaint shops and piazzas, winding brick paths and adobe benches. Browsers can spend a whole day making their way through the more than 100 stores, boutiques and galleries that sell Southwestern goods as well as unique products from around the world.

San Felipe de Neri Church is a historic Catholic church located on the north side of Old Town Plaza. Built in 1793, it is one of the oldest surviving buildings in the city. Originally, Don Francisco Cuervo y Valdez named the church San Francisco Xavier, after the Viceroy of New Spain. Shortly afterward, The Duke of Albuquerque changed the name to San Felipe, after the King Philip of Spain. San Felipe de Neri was established in 1706 under the

direction of Fray Manuel Moreno and initially stood to the northwest of the Plaza. The original building was completed in 1719. The original church building collapsed in 1792 after a heavy rain and was replaced by the current structure the following year. The towers were added in 1861, a parish school was constructed in 1878, and a convent for the Sisters of Charity was built on the west side of the church in 1881. Today the church complex is undergoing extensive renovations inside and out.



Having extra time, we selected Casa de Ruiz Church Street Cafe to have lunch. We had a delightful lunch to the sound of running water in the outside courtyard. Here's a notice to all of you readers familiar with New Mexican cuisine, I thoroughly enjoyed tasting, once again, sopapillas. This was a new eating treat for Alan and Michele. We had one left. Michele promptly wrapped it up for later eating!

The restaurant we ate at was Casa de Ruiz which literally translates to "the house of Ruiz". This house has a long and distinctive history. The house was built during the founding of



Albuquerque sometime after 1706. This would make Casa de Ruiz the oldest residence in Albuquerque and one of the oldest structures in the state of New Mexico.

The property was originally a residence built by the Ruiz family in the early 1700's. It remained a residence until the last inhabitant, Rufina G. Ruiz died in 1991 at the age of 91. The house has never been sold and remains in the Ruiz family today as a restaurant.



After lunch we headed off for a place called "Tinkertown". What we found both intrigued and amazed us. It took Ross Ward over forty years to carve, collect and lovingly construct what is now Tinkertown Museum. His miniature wood carved figures were first part of a traveling exhibit, driven to county fairs and carnivals in the 1960's and '70's. Today, over 50,000 glass bottles form rambling walls that surround a 22 room museum. Wagon wheels, old-fashioned store fronts and wacky western memorabilia

make Tinkertown's exterior as much a museum as the wonders inside.



Inside, the magic of animation takes over. The inhabitants of a raucous little western town animate to hilarious life. Under the big-top, diminutive circus performers challenge tigers and defy gravity while the Fat Lady fans herself and a polar bear teeter-totter.

Throughout, eccentric collections of Americana (wedding cake couples, antique tools, dolls, bullet pencils...) fill Tinkertown's winding hallways. Otto the





One-man-Band and Esmerelda, the Fortune Teller need only a quarter to play a tune or predict your future.

Through a doorway and across a ramp waits a big-sized surprise: a 35 foot antique wooden sailboat that braved a ten year voyage around the world.



Ross Ward was born to paint, carve and tinker. As a boy growing up in the midwest, he was captivated by the tiny villages, farms and circuses created by "spare time carvers." His own miniature world began with circus figures carved while in junior high school. He began carving the first figures for the turn-of-the-century general store in 1962.



With Ross' untimely death in 2002 at age 62 from early-onset Alzheimer's Disease, his wife, Carla continues to share their museum/imaginarium with visitors from around the world. This is probably more than you ever wanted to know about this place, but we were enthralled with the whole collection.



Our next stop was a trip on the Sandia Peak Aerial Tram. The normal operating hours Labor Day to Memorial Day are 9am to 8pm EXCEPT Tuesday: 5pm to 8pm. This day





happens to be Tuesday. After visiting Tinkertown, we had 1 1/2 hours until the first Flight (that's what they call the trip up the mountain.) I suggested we look for a Dairy Queen. Now THAT was not an easy task! Alan punched

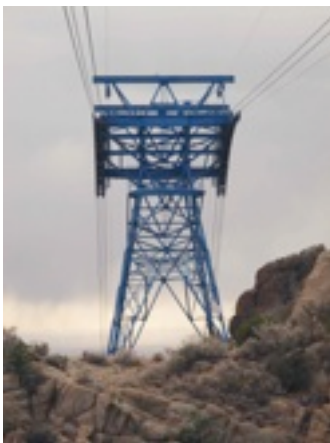
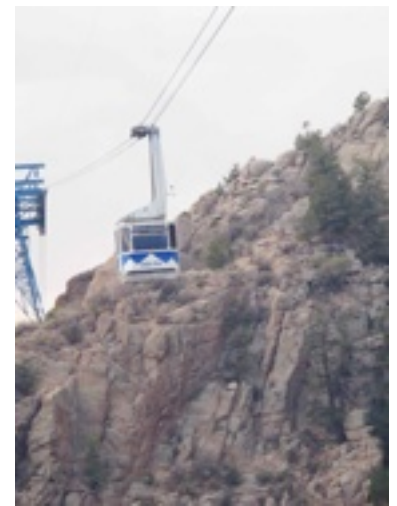


in Dairy Queen on his GPS. Fortunately we had plenty of time to drive almost clear across Albuquerque! Hey! We DQ aficionados will travel miles for our DQ treats. This trip today was our third DQ stop in the last 3 days! This was not an easy trip. It happened to be rush hour traffic - to boot! I enjoyed a root beer float while Alan and Michele tried out their new Orange Julius. Alan proclaimed it to be as good as he remembered. We then Hightailed it back across town, just in time to make the first "flight" up the tram.



Our trip up was full and I was disappointed at not being able to take photos. However, the top terminal offered some picturesque shots. When we got to the top we found the weather much cooler and windier. Coming down the car was not so crowded and I was able to get a window and many more photos!

Bell, Engineering of Lucerne, Switzerland constructed the tramway in what they considered their most difficult tramway construction project, primarily because of the steep and rocky terrain. Entering service on May 7, 1966, the tram makes 10,500 trips per year. The tram is a type known as a



"double reversible jigback aerial tramway," where "jigback" means that as one tram car is ascending, the other is descending. Its two cars are capable of carrying 50 passengers each and have numerous safety and backup systems, such as multiple emergency braking systems and a grounding system that ensures the safety of passengers in the event of a lightning strike. New tram cars were installed in 1986, and new track cables in 2009.



A trip up the mountain takes fifteen minutes to ascend 3,819 ft (1,164 m), and the normal operating speed of the tram is 12 miles per hour (19 km/h) . Approximately four "flights" leave



every hour from the base and top departure stations. The view from the tram includes all of Albuquerque and roughly 11,000 square miles (28,000 square kilometers) of the New Mexico countryside.

Wow! What a wonderful day of sightseeing! It was truly entertaining and educational. I want to thank Alan and Michele for taking me along with them. We arrived back at the RV park about 7:00. Since we had that big lunch at Old Town, AND the DQ treats, no dinner fixing was necessary. That was my day. Thanks for coming along with me.

- - Earl

Earl's Diary - Wednesday - May 8, 2013

Dear Readers, this is a traveling day. Our first duty this morning was to have breakfast at the dining room of the RV park. This morning they served hard boiled eggs, bagels, and toaster waffles. They did have a little problem getting the waffle toaster working. Apparently it worked fine - just until the time I wanted to use it. Did I blow the breaker? The refrigerator and TV had also gone out. Now THAT couldn't have been my fault! The managers were still scratching their heads as we left.

Our ultimate destination this morning was Amarillo, Texas - about 280 miles. Not too much to report on this leg of the trip. We had a little search going on. We wanted to see how many Dairy Queens we could spot. Michele said we should find 6; my guess, 10; Alan went with 11. Due to my uninitiated ignorance, I had no idea of the vast nothingness of anything between Tucumcari, NM and Amarillo, TX. Our final count was 4 DQ's. We rejoiced when we followed a string of signs for Stuckey's AND Dairy Queen ahead. Next 4 miles - - next 3 miles - - next 2 miles -- take next exit - - which I did. We circled the building, hopped eagerly out of our vehicles with expectant delight. All of a sudden we wondered why there was such little activity. Coming to sudden halt, we discovered the place was closed - apparently it for good! What a disappointment! We continued down the freeway, but alas, no more DQ's. We had to settle for Subway Sands.

We are now parked at Fort Amarillo RV Park. It's rustic appearing but adequate. We were filled with merry glee to discover they have a indoor heated pool! My first exploration expedition was to seek out said pool and laundry room. A little later I collected my week's worth of laundry, put on my bathing suit, and headed for the pool/ laundry room (they are adjacent to each other). While the laundry was doing its thing, Michele and I took advantage of the pool. Well - it was indoors and a pool. Apparently the heater had been turned off recently. The water was fine, once you became adjusted to it. We stayed in for almost 45 minutes. It couldn't have been THAT bad! In fact, it was down right refreshing!

Yes, of course, it is windy here! After we crossed the New Mexico Texas border, I notice a long line of wind generators off in the distance. That line of generators followed the freeway for a distance of 25 miles! Wow! This is a good place for those.

Tomorrow we see what's in Amarillo. Thanks for coming along with me. - - Earl