

2008 vacation, abridged:

Friday, 10/3:

425 miles; cloudy in Chatham, cleared up as went west through the afternoon and evening; temps in lower 50's.

Finished loading the car, and doing other stuff, and got out of town about 1 or so, after dropping off the dvd and the jacket money and lists to Monica - 'Why aren't you gone!?' - 'The next thing you see will be my taillights heading west!'

Went down 88 and 86, couple of stops, for lunch at rest area by Worcester, to get gas, to call Stephen to tell him I am on the way, grabbed supper at a Wendy's and made it to the TA in Harborcreek, PA for the night. A little chilly and a lot of stuff to move in my 'personal size RV', but comfy enough for the price.

Saturday, 10/4:

555 miles; 38 at 8 a.m., up to 60 over into Ohio and Indiana, nice day all along.

Had the good 'Buckhorn' oatmeal for breakfast, chatted with a driver across the counter about kids and life today, and got going about 8-ish. Uneventful travel across Ohio turnpike and Indiana-talked to some drivers, one said 'New York-must be lost', I said I didn't get lost 'just sometimes might not be on the road I originally intended to be on' and we kicked that around for a few miles. Cut up to Rockport, IL, and found a campground for the night, enough light to enjoy the lake view through the trees for a bit. Cooked supper on wet wood and sat by the fire for a while, very pleasant, not too chilly.

Sunday, 10/5:

338 miles; 50's in morning, overcast and some showers.

Slept in a little, had some tea, showered, tried to find the picnic area to eat breakfast in on my way out of the campground and got all turned about so when I went out I was way away from the road I wanted - but not lost! Found the way to Route 20 - which went past a lovely little park with rose gardens and pavilions, so I stopped there and watched a family feed the geese and swans, got a photo of a stork in a tree - a sweet bonus. The woman said she works at a Subway and takes the stale bread to feed the fish and birds, there were koi in the pond. Very pretty, lots of rose and other flower plantings.

Off and on rain - pretty ride across Route 20, stopped at a re-creation of an old fort, then a little bit in Galena, then on to Dubuque, ended up going across the river again into Wisconsin, and then touring the town looking for the road I wanted, very bad signs there - but I wasn't lost. Finally got onto the 'Great River Road', which has some nice views of the Mississippi and wanders through more farmland and pretty towns; one view area on a steep hill above the river, a couple of women were selling jams and honey there so of course I got some of both. On up to

Albert Lea, Minnesota and found another TA for the night, they had a food court with a 'mix-it-to-order' ice cream booth - fat-free sweet cream with Ghirardelli chocolate chips-yum.

Monday, 10/6:

484 miles; 54 at 8 a.m., overcast, some rain in the middle of the day and then clearing towards evening, 50's and low 60's during day.

Up about 7. Scenery is still flat and farms for the most part. In Mitchell, South Dakota stopped at the Corn Palace, it is quite a project, putting the design together with dyed corn cobs and different ornamental grasses on the outside, inside it's not much, a sports arena with a hallway with photos of every year's designs, and a cheesy - should say corny - snack bar, but I did get a corn dog. When I went in and signed the guest register, I got talking with the women on the desk, both older, about having a snack bar with all corn things: corn chowder, corn fritters, and so on. One left and I kept talking to the other one and some how she brought up that she'd seen something about Calamity Jane and Buffalo Bill, I said I thought I had read somewhere once that they were indeed an 'item', and that I thought she had been in his Wild West show. To which she said "Oh, I wouldn't know about that, I don't go to those much any more". Really? Raining pretty steady, so didn't spend too much time outside. Also went to an Indian museum and archeological dig, that was interesting - about 1,000 years old, the dig is under a dome so you can look at the whole thing, in any weather, which was nice because by now it was pouring. Cleared up further west, stopped at a couple of view and rest areas, one with nice views of the edges of the Badlands. Two guys traveling on motorcycles stopped, chatted with them a bit, they're from Nashville and apparently do road trips fairly regularly, mentioned some places they'd been, and I've been. Went in to Wall, for the Wall Drug store - which is a great big tourist trap full of shops, but did find a couple of books on sale. Asked a what would be a nice and reasonable motel and she said 'any one without a swimming pool'. Walked down the street for supper, adequate if not great, and a little walk around a little bit of the little town and back to tv and sleep.

Tuesday, 10/7:

286 miles; 40 at 7:45 a.m., seasonal temps throughout the day, clear and sunny all day.

Up about 7 again, quick bite at the motel lobby and on. Stopped at the visitor center in Rapid City, and then down to Crazy Horse monument - in 5 years the progress is not huge, I would have to compare photos to see what it was, they are now working on the horse's head and you can see some difference there. Walked around, looked at the art show and other exhibits, had lunch sitting on a stone on the edge of the parking lot looking at the monument, took some pictures and on. Through the Black Hills and national forest again, lovely ride, into Wyoming. Stopped at Buffalo for night, at a campground, made supper and sat by fire again, a stubborn one again, why don't campgrounds realize that people would like dry wood to make fires that burn from. Was going to leave some stuff outside but just as I was getting ready for bed the wind came up so hard I quick brought it all into the car-and then in a bit of course the wind stopped. I think it would have blown the tent around if I'd put that up. Beautiful clear starry night with a half moon. Chilly but not real cold.

Wednesday, 10/8:

335 miles; 43 at 9 a.m., some clouds, overcast at the top of the mountain with a few flakes of snow, cleared up on other side of the pass and was nice.

Up about 7 again, and headed into the mountains, taking two scenic drives, one west on Route 16 and then north to Route 14 to go back east to I-90 near Montana line. Absolutely gorgeous rides - 16 goes up into the ponderosa pine mountains, and rocky peaks, nice views of both those, and beautiful scenery all the way. Took a side trip to Crazy Woman Canyon, which had been posted at the campground as a scenic area-down-and I mean DOWN! a windy dirt track full of ruts and stones, but it was awesome pretty scenery. Stopped to talk to and photo a mule deer family, mama and two babies and another - the babies kept looking and looking at me, mama stood back to advise them. A pretty stream towards the bottom of the canyon, I finally turned around after a couple of miles. Went over Powder River Pass, 9686' on the way west, and Granite Pass, 9033' on the way east. On 16 there was a monument to 12 firefighters who were lost in a forest fire in 1937. More views and scenery going east, not quite as 'grand' but still awesome - one turnout near the end of the pass going down with a 180+ view of the valley below and more mountains beyond. Road down on 14 had a lot of switchbacks and steep grades. Came around one curve and here was a cow (signs all along about Open Range, watch for animals) on the shoulder, a mini van coming up the hill, and she was so scared she tried to climb over the guardrail, which would have been a disaster for her since they are sparring with their guardrails except for the worst drop-offs. She finally got loose of it and went over on the other side nearer the pasture. Numerous photo op stops. The scenery - rock formations and all, rivals Utah canyons I think.

Got back on interstate, to Custer Battlefield with about ½ hour to see it, so just hit a couple of the monuments and the graveyard with the stones where the soldiers were found. There is a monument to the Indians and mention of them, a nice touch. Went on up to Billings to the Flying J for the night.

Thursday, 10/9:

344 miles; 36 in morning and cloudy but cleared up to the west, got to 40's and low 50's later in the day.

Chilly again in the morning, and talk of a big storm coming in with up to 12" of snow by the end of the weekend so thought it was a good place to get right the hell out of and did. Nice ride across the state, gorgeous scenery again, a few photo op stops and stopped at a place called Wheat Montana, a flour milling operation with a great deli/bakery. Good sandwich and a cinnamon roll the size of a dinner plate. To Missoula about 4, and went to the hotel I have reserved for tomorrow, even though last night when I called they said there were no rooms, figured I'd try, they have one with no window so I said I'd give it a try and see if I wanted to move tomorrow. Nice room, nice people. Called Stephen, and went over to Curtis's to pick him up, he showed me around a little, some of his hangouts and where he works in the city, and out

to a hiking and biking area on the edge of the city, and then we went to the HuHut, a Mongolian Grill where his roommate works, had supper, dropped him off and came 'home'. There are CISM classes going on in rooms on either side of me-a bit ironic.

Friday, 10/10:

No mileage, did a total of 519 for the time here; weather mostly nice, temps in the 50's during day and down into 30's at night.

Talk of snow here also, but only flurries in and around the city. Went for the free breakfast at the hotel, a real breakfast not just coffee and rolls and cereal, very good. Also a computer in the lobby for guests to use so checked email. Picked Stephen up about 11 and we went to get his new cell service, then took a ride around Pattee Canyon, a pretty area where they go skateboarding, a long run down a hill. Looped around that drive and then to a few other places near the city, a view of the Milltown, where I guess they have recently closed a lumber mill and taken out the dam, seems to be a bit controversial. To The Old Post, where he works, for lunch, his roommate came by and ate with us, and the guy at the place paid. Then went to the Bike Doctor, visited there a bit, dropped him off and came back to the motel and napped, then went out to meet him at the Bike Doctor and got all twizzled around but finally ended up at the right place in spite of it all. Had Stephen on the cell phone and he was a few streets over but could see me going back and forth through intersections. Went there for 'happy hour', then went down to a park for a 'race' - some sort of very unofficial thing that seemed a reason to drink beer, but they had a good time - Stephen didn't race, just watched. It was pretty cold standing there. We left around 9-ish, and as we were two guys were streaking the track. Met many of Stephen's friends, seem like nice kids. Back to hotel, and used the hotel microwave to heat some soup but the bowl was soft from being in it so spilled soup all over their counter and had to mop up, watched some tv and bed.

Saturday, 10/11:

Got woke up with a lot of people talking in the hallway - and when I opened the door to go to breakfast, there was one guy leaning on it and one leaning on the jam on the other side, surely did startle both of them! They said they didn't even know it was a room, they thought it was a staff room or another meeting room. Anyway, I told them it was okay if they were there for the CISM because I do the same thing. Breakfast, then called Stephen and went to pick him up and go out to the Garnet Ghost Town - a beautiful ride out there along the Blackfoot River, and then up the mountain, with a couple of panoramic view areas that showed several mountain ranges: Rattlesnake, Mission and Swan, and also the Bob Marshall Wilderness, which is where Curtis is with a hunting party. A few interpretive sites on the way up, including a fire watch cabin next to an old stage stop hotel, can't imagine going over that road in a stagecoach, but of course they did. The town was quite interesting, way on the top of the mountain, it was cold! About 28, with an inch or so of snow-poor Stephen in his sneakers - he said it was not the place to wear canvas shoes to. Quite a few of the buildings still in decent shape, some being used by BLM staff, but the old saloon, hotel, store, blacksmith and some homes show what life was like there - had to be harsh in the winters, with just the layers of paper for insulation-some buildings showed open chinks between the logs-traces of wallpaper, and some nice carvings on the back bar, some

furniture still in place, but some of the buildings are leaning way over looking about to topple. Went back down the other side of the mountain, on a twisty steep little road that Stephen thought would be a great mountain bike run. Dropped him off, came to the hotel, sat in the easy chair and fell asleep. Went back out to watch them practice kickball, then went for supper at a little place downtown - had 'gumbalaya', a mix of gumbo and jambalaya, very yummy, at only \$6 a bowl. Came back and did some laundry and watched tv again and read and bed.

Sunday 10/12:

Overcast and snow showers in the morning, didn't go anyplace today. I went downtown, to the carousel and walked around it, and walked along the river a bit, and then rode on the carousel, because some things you are never too old for. Called Stephen again and he was at Curtis's to watch football, so I headed back to the hotel, got sidetracked at the 'gourmet' Good Food Store and got some salad for lunch, went out to the picnic area by the little brook to eat, read, took a walk down the street, went to the casino next door and wasted \$2 worth of time, then went to get Stephen and we went to the Montana Club for dinner, which he said was expensive and the hamburger bun wasn't as good as the bread the place he used to work for made. Back to hotel and decided to watch tv instead of do wash, have to work that in somewhere before I leave, tho.

Monday, 10/13:

Got an early-ish start to go up to Flathead Lake and the Bison Range and get back in time for the kickball game, well, ended up leaving town about maybe 10:15 or 10:30 instead of after 11. The drive to Flathead was awesome, with a view of the snow-capped Mission Range most of the way - couple of photo op stops, and drove through Polson which reminds me of Lake George, found a road I hoped would go right to the lake but didn't but did have a couple of nice views from it. Stopped at a place called Three Dog Down, which had some neat stuff including a cozy fuzzy throw that I talked myself into getting one of. Also got some glove/mitts for Stephen and myself, and couple of bars of Montana soap. Grabbed McD's and went down to the Bison Range, which was worth it just for the ride through, up and over a mountain with fabulous views, did see a few bison, also deer and mule deer and pronghorns, and then along a pretty creek some elk, first two stags and then three more-very nice.

Got Stephen back home, came to hotel and had some of their soup and used up my veggie leftovers for salad. Then went over to the game, which was great fun to watch, with people in outlandish outfits, a lot of noise and not much officiating - make that none, except for the teams themselves. The games go for an hour, and whoever is ahead at the end wins -Stephen's team, the Zoo Killers, won this against their 'rivals' the Pirates, who are from the Old Post where he works - his team is from he Bike Doctor shop. Uncle Curtis showed up and we talked most of the way through the game and after, he has been off in the Bob Marshall wilderness with a hunting party - place where you ride horses 28 miles in - sounds like pure heaven! Watched the next game and talked some more. Finally told them I was turning into a pumpkin and came to the hotel, watched tv and fell asleep.

Tuesday, 10/14:

Rain in morning, clearing a bit later.

Did wash, called Monica and Lynne, who had left a message yesterday laughing about me being in lots of snow: Monica: 'are ya up to your nipples in snow?' - talked to them. Went to the Chevy dealer down the street and got the oil changed, then went to see the Smoke Jumper Center but it is closed for winter, then went over to Curtis's, Stephen was there and we sat around a bit and then took a walk through the downtown, stopped at a few stores and gallery that had a nice showing of pictures of tractors and trucks. Went back to Curtis's and he showed pictures of another hunt, and a grizzly that got hit by a tractor-trailer. Went to another good place for supper, ordered the shepherd's pie, which was about twice what I could eat. Dropped him back at Curtis's and to hotel to do some packing and rearrange the car again to put stuff back in.

Wednesday 10/15:

335 miles, 30's in a.m., up to 40's as went south, partly cloudy.

Dragged many trips worth of stuff to the car, and got going about 9:30 or so, stopped to gas up at \$2.99.9 a gallon! And went to see Stephen, I was hanging around long enough but still hard to leave him here and go. Went south through the Bitterroot Valley, stopped in Stevensville to see Vince Felty (the 'Will Rogers' roper) and his wife (Donna?)-they have a great place, on top of a ridge with almost a 360 view of the Bitterroots and the other mountain ranges around, nice house, charming little apartment in the basement that she's fixed up for guests - one coming today for 'a ranch experience' - horses, cows, a goat, dogs, a cat that looked like Prettycurr so I carried her around for a while. Visited there and then Vince and I went into town for lunch and talked-such a nice guy-have an open invitation to come back and stay a while. Went south on 93 into Idaho, along the Salmon River Scenic Byway, which certainly was, a lovely ride along the river, with hills on the other side-turned off onto Rt. 20 and 26, then 26 over to I-15 near Pocatello, and down to the Flying J at McCammon for the night.

Thursday, 10/16:

300 miles; high 30's in a.m., sunny, up to 70's by Salt Lake and south of there.

Pretty chilly when I got up-30's-headed down towards Salt Lake, stopped for breakfast at Utah welcome center, and got a fistful of tourist guides and decided to go to one of the places, 9-Mile Canyon, which has loads of petroglyphs - found the turnoff, and went in to try to find the advertised campground-a pretty ride, mountains, farms/ranches, on a rough gravel road - at one point I came up behind cowboys rounding up the herd and just hung back watching - one said 'you can come on by' and I said 'I'm having too much fun watching you' - I was. Found the campground, and picked a site-complete with a couple of logs and some cow flops. Reheated my leftover shepherd's pie and it was just as good the second time - sat and read by the fire - and a pack of coyotes started serenading on the hill across the creek behind me - sweet if a bit eerie - loud yaps and softer mumblings under that. Heard them later, further away. Nice full moon and lots of stars. Chilly.

Friday, 10/17:

175 miles; mid-30's in a.m., up to 70's during day.

Drove up the 40 + miles of the 9 Mile Canyon, looking at many, many petroglyphs, it is loaded with them, and most right by the road for easy viewing. Also old ranches with interesting buildings and remains for photo ops, plus a few working ranches. The road splits, and I went to the top of the summit, with a panorama view, saw smoke but it was a few ridges over so couldn't see what it was for sure - it was still showing late in the afternoon when I got back down to Rt. 6. Then came back down and took the other split to a rest area with a little canyon and short hike to see more petroglyphs, had lunch there; and went further down that road to see a gorgeous panel of hunters and deer, and large buffalo, and also some pictographs there. Then a long dusty and bumpy ride back to Rt. 6, with a couple of stops for pictures. The same cowboys were milling around in the road by their holding corral, and the one I talked with yesterday asked was I back or just coming out, and I asked "You still rounding up those same cows?" and he said "Hope we got some different ones this time". Grabbed a Subway for supper in Wellington and ate on the way down to I-70, and went down to Moab, stayed at the campground I did before. Got a site, again too lazy to set up the tent, use the 'personal RV' again. Went down to the 'group fire' and got chatting with a couple from Colorado, there to go dirt biking, Turns out she is a bike mechanic, who worked the Iron Man in Lake Placid this summer - and who had biked across the country and stayed in Missoula.

Saturday 10/18:

204 miles; 50's in a.m., to 70's during day, sunny, lovely southwest weather.

Shower and breakfast, and headed south on 191. Stopped at a lovely rest area, then took a side trip in to 'Looking Glass Arch', in a solitary rock all by itself out in the desert, very pretty. Stopped at Wilson Arch, right along the highway with people crawling all over it. Went in to the Needles Overlook of Canyonlands, awesome views of that part of the canyon, but the needles and other sights named too far away to see easily. Still awesome. Stopped in a visitor center in Monticello, where the geezer on duty told me about the road down side of the mountain, Moki Dugway, into Monument Valley, and also about a place called Gooseneck SP, where the San Juan River does a 'meander' looping around a series of cliffs, looking like a gooseneck design. Decided to go and got there just at sundown, after some photo op stops for the sunset on the far away monuments. Could still see some of the river and cliffs, there were several cars there with people looking and taking pictures, one from NY so I said 'hi, we're neighbors'. Then everyone else watching left and there I was, in the 'campground' - a vault toilet, one picnic table by the overlook, and two others a hundred or so yards away by a big open gravelly area. Went over there and staked a claim, backed the car up to the table and set the hand brake, since even though it was 20 or so yards from the edge, still not much in the way of guard rails, none in fact, just large boulders every 5 or so feet apart. Fixed supper and sat by the fire enjoying being the only person in a thousand miles. Saw some lights that I can't figure what they were - thought headlights coming down the road but then they didn't, thought they were on the highway, but they weren't, no idea what they could have been - UFO's? Then did see headlights and heard a car, a couple coming to be here for sunrise, they came over by me and asked questions I couldn't answer about the park, and then they parked over by the overlook. I did tell them to not drive

any further forward at my site because the first step was a bitch. Very glad I decided to come here.

Sunday 10/19:

201 miles; high 40's probably in early a.m., 52 when left Gooseneck Park, up to 70's and sunny later in day, another southwest weather day.

Woke up before dawn and watched the sun come up over the mountains way off in the east, then walked around and took pictures of the river and rocks and dawn light on the mesas. Went out and back up to Blanding then around to the Dugway, with stops at Butler Wash ruins and Mule Canyon ruins - the first a nice walk in to a lovely site, the second the site is in the rest area, and you can walk around and in it - and go down into the kiva which I did not because I wasn't sure I could get back out. Got to the Dugway, first went to the view area at the top, another awesome panorama, with you right at the edge of the drop-off a few thousand feet down into the valley. The Dugway road was gravel and full of switchbacks and quite steep but not as bad as I'd thought it would be. Went on to Monument Valley and I think the Navajo and I were the only ones speaking English in the whole place - lots of European tourists and they were rude and horrible drivers on the washboard dusty road. Came out just at sunset and got some (hope I got them) nice pictures of that and the Mittens in the afterglow. Went down to Kayenta and got a room at Holiday Inn for \$100 (!), had supper and caught up a little journal and some tv and to bed.

Monday 10/20:

182 miles; 50's early, windy and spitting rain, to 62 when left, up into 70's again and sunny.

Went to the Navajo National Monument, hiked down a canyon, and puffed my way back up, then hiked out to a view area, back to the center and had lunch. Then stopped for photo op outside of Kayenta, and took a pretty ride down to Canyon de Chelly, with a couple of photo op stops. Got there in time to see the South Rim views, most of them anyway, before dark, and then went to the campground, made supper and read - no fires allowed. Never thought about animals around there, and no warning signs, so I left things out on the table, including my box of food and the leftover spaghetti in a Tupperware and during the night the neighborhood stray dogs had a field day with it.

Tuesday 10/21:

213 miles; high 40's overnight, in a.m., 57 in a.m., to low 70's but only 30's in Cortez, beautiful day.

Got up about 5 to potty, and found the mess-stuff strewn all over the campsite! Picked up most of it - couldn't find the roll of paper towels or the plastic bag of leftover uncooked spaghetti. My cocoa, tuna in packs, and the leftover cooked spaghetti are gone - the Tupperware chewed up, scraps of paper wrappings all over, things shredded - they must have had a field day. Picked up most and went back to bed, woke up about 7:30, went to potty and on the way back sniffed and

said 'I thought there were no fires' and looked around and saw smoke coming from the other side of a big motor home, and then it was too much smoke for a campfire, the motor home was on fire! Looked quick for an extinguisher, must have left it out, then ran over, the people and dogs had gotten out and were fine, and several other motor homers had used extinguishers to put it out. Back and got dressed and fixed breakfast - found the paper towels in the roadway about 100 feet from my car - cleaned up things and did a little repacking, then went out to look at the canyon more-went to White House overlook, thought about hiking down to it but gave it up as a bad idea, I'd have to be carried out! About 500-600 feet down in the canyon-it would be neat to get up close to the ruin, but . . . I did walk down a little ways, and was looking when a Navajo man came down-said he was going to visit his grandmother, pointed out her house on the canyon floor, said she raises peaches and apples, alfalfa, corn, other veggies there; went on to say how the canyon makes people feel better, gives peace and so on. Decided instead to splurge on a horse ride so took a 3 hour one down the canyon to two ruins and also some pictographs and petroglyphs, just delightful. I had a speckled white horse named Sherman - he kept lagging behind the guide and then going into a jarring trot to catch up - the guide pointed out potsherds on the ground, and took me to two of the ruins. Stopped at one point to talk to another guy with a jeep and tourists, when we rode away Kee the guide said they had said I was the Lone Ranger on the white horse and he was Tonto - I said he could take that as an ethnic comment. Got lots of extra history of the valley and the people in it from him. So glad I did it, even for the money. Went out along the North Rim, again very impressive, lovely views of the sites, and all the scenery down to and in the valley floor. Some of the Navajo live down there, interesting to see their homes, farms and hogans. Wound up back on Route 160 and then decided to try to make Cortez to see Jeanie, and did, got there just after they had gotten back from their side trip to Blanding and Bluff, she was in Blanding at the museum while I was calling her on Sunday morning. Went to her hotel, no rooms there so got a really nice one across the street for probably half the price, went to the Denny's for some supper and chatted and looked at some of her pictures, and caught this up and watched tv and went to bed.

Wednesday, 10/22:

359 miles; low 30's when left Cortez, up into 40's, and down to 20's on top of the passes, but a nice sunny day with a few clouds here and there.

Got up in time to see Jeanie's group getting in to their vans but didn't see her, breakfast at the hotel and went along towards Durango - stopped in town there but it is all yuppified so did not go to any shops or anything, did stop at a little park along the river that was sort of pretty but had a definite odor from the 'waste treatment plant' next to it. On to Pagosa Springs, where I stopped at a candy/fancy food place and got quite a few things; then up over Wolf Creek Pass which is quite a ride. At the top I took the side road to go to the Lobo Overlook, but part way up it got icy and rutted so I turned around and came back. They don't squander any money on those sissy guard rails, guess they figure the trees will stop you if you go off the road, sooner or later. Again gorgeous views and scenery. At a view area there were flowers in the fence at the edge of the drop off, wonder if that is because someone fell there? Then headed down 285, to Chama over another pass, another nice scenic ride, stopped for photos of an old burned out church, and views from the summit. Got down to where the narrow gauge railroad crosses the highway several times, then in to Chama just as the train was being put away, so got a shot of it. Stopped

for supper (delicious trout with a pinon nut sauce, yummy) and asked about places to stay but the one place that would have been reasonable did not answer the phone, and the place I stopped at wanted \$79 for a room, so I said no thanks and went on down toward Santa Fe - stopped in Pojauque (sp?) at the casino and parked over by a couple of rv's, went in and played the penny machines for a little bit and went out to bed.

Thursday 10/23:

391 miles; 28 in a.m., to high 40's, 30 at top of Scandia Peak.

Went down through Santa Fe, following signs for 'Tourist Information & Museums' but never did find the Info place and only saw one museum, not a lot of signage to help tourists out if you ask me. Took the Turquoise Trail, a scenic route that goes through some old mining towns and comes out on I-40 east of Albuquerque. It was a nice ride, with the neat old towns-one still looking pretty much older and worn out, but starting to be yuppified, the other, Madrid, where the movie Wild Hogs was shot is Santa Fe Junior, all high-price shops and galleries, except for the mercantile. Got a cup of tea and wandered through town, to the saloon which serves breakfast and had a nice big breakfast burrito for a decent price. Stopped in a couple of shops, got a chai tea, a tee-shirt that says 'Bad Coffee Sucks' for Monica, and then in a jewelry store and got nice pedants for both Lynne and Monica for Christmas, and a little model of the Laguna Mission for me. On down the road to Golden, the next old mining town, took pictures of an old mission and falling down buildings. Took the side trip to Sandia Peak, 10,000+- feet, again awesome views of the valley and of Albuquerque. To I-40 and on, stopped in Moriarty for gas, Cuervo for ghost town pictures, Tucumcari for potty and went on to Amarillo, looked at a campground and they want \$30 a night so went to the TA truckstop and pulled in next to an rv, near the bobtails. Got a pizza for supper, chatted briefly with drivers waiting to pay for stuff about sleeping in the cold, and out to bed.

Friday, 10/24:

471 miles; 34 in a.m., to 60 at OKC and 45 at Joplin, another nice day for travel.

Up and went in to get a shower, feels like old. Decided to go to the Cowboy Museum in OKC; stopped at a rest area near Groom for breakfast, it is all fixed up with signs from old Route 66, and outside plaques on benches and in the ground with history and info on the road, also had instead of concrete a softer, different colors stuff on the ground in some places, don't know what it was. Nice, much nicer than the old place was! Stopped in Shamrock and took photos of the old Route 66 gas station. Bypassed the Bombing Memorial to have more time at the museum, which was great. They have the original, restored, sculpture of the 'End of The Trial' a wonderful western art display, lovely gardens with ponds and waterfalls outside, places where former rodeo and other notable horses and bulls are buried or have memorial plaques, koi in the ponds, exhibits on movie cowboys, ranching, rodeo, military, Indians - a fantastic place to go back to and spend more time. Got gas at Flying J near the turnpike entrance for \$2.09 a gallon! To Joplin for the night, to the Flying J which has a parking area for rv's.

Saturday, 10/25:

561 miles; low 40's in a.m. to high 40's and low 50's, sunny nice day again.

Stopped at the outlet store in Lebanon and got a bunch of odds and ends, and a nice fry pan for myself. Decided to go to the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, but got sidetracked first by a Route 66 State Park in Eureka, a bit west of the city, built over where an old vacation town had sprung up. The town was abandoned after a flood in 1982 because a guy oiled the dirt roads some years earlier and there was dioxin in the oil so it wasn't safe-everything got torn down and the soil 'washed' in the 1990's, and the park created on top of it, nice walking, biking areas, and a stretch of old Route 66 going over the bridge at the entrance. The visitor center is in the old building, an old hotel, that I always admired from the highway, and has a neat Route 66 little museum in it. Went on to the Arch, it is some impressive, so tall-wanted to take the ride to the top but the tram tickets were all taken, so just walked around, in the museum there and the grounds. Found a nice place for a good photo of the whole thing. Waffled my way out of the city and on through Illinois and past Indianapolis; wanting to put on miles to maybe get home tomorrow night. Planned to stop at the Pilot in Mt. Comfort, where it to be is now an rv dealer and the Pilot is across the highway and not nearly as big and no restaurant - many changes btw in many areas - keep looking at things and saying 'that's new'.

Sunday, 10/26:

832 miles; 44 in a.m., into 50's during day, partly sunny, some spits of rain here and there.

Took a 'Camp Katrina shower' in the car and on. Stopped just into Ohio for breakfast and called Jesse and Sara to say I'd probably be home tonight, and Monica just to chat. She said she thought I'd stop at the outlets in PA, but I said that was too far out of the way. Then I called her back later to say I found a Vanity Fair store in an outlet mall and would be stopping there. Then there was a big backup on the highway because of an accident in construction - 16 miles ahead! I was right by an exit so got off and checked the map and figured I found a way around it, and then heard a trucker talking about the same route so took it, ended up just behind the guy talking about the route, who was from the area, and ended up chatting with he and another trucker in front of me - there was road kill in our lane and they both questioned what animal it was so I said 'It was a skunk, I could smell it' and they commented that they heard a female voice but maybe it was a 4-wheeler because they couldn't see another big truck, so I said 'yes it's female and yes it's a 4-wheeler' - then the one guy asked was I a driver taking a break so I said no I used to drive but long story don't any more, and just on a little vacation. Passed the time and saw some new scenery, couple of cute towns, lots of farms. Lots of McCain/Palin signs on lawns with an Obama/Biden one here and there, must cause some neighborly dissent. Back to the interstate and no more detours, made PA just before dark, and decided it was too close to home to stop so went on - got home at 12:30, after an over 800 mile day. Cats were very glad to see me, Streetcar climbed all over me and got under the covers with me, but he didn't start to purr until early in the morning.

And that was my trip.

Totals: 7594 miles

24 days (6 days in Missoula)

18 states (and 5 repeated)

