

## MY VACATION JOURNAL (2003) – THE BIG ONE!

**Friday, 9/19:** Wanted to leave early today but of course had bunch of things to do, like find the nysca final report pages for Lynne and finish packing and more and more and more. Then had a message from Stevie that he was in the hospital, for tests for his heart-and so on. Plus there was a hurricane, we had rain and wind but were on the edges of it, it was further west and the weather would have been bad. Got out of town about 5, and did run in to some rain starting on I-88, and on and off across Route 17/I-86. Stopped at the Buckhorn in Belmont and tried the sleeping in the car thing. Have to move quite a few things, but that will not be too bad, I can figure out how to make it less of a chore. Fuel Desk girl did a whole routine on the not being able to smoke indoors-she was crying on the wrong shoulder. Got there about 10:30, left about 8 am.

**Saturday, 9/20:** Had the doors locked, of course, and thought when I got up I could just hit the unlock button and open the back door-Wrong! The alarm started the horn beeping and made an awful racket too early in the morning. Fortunately I had the keys handy to push the unlock button and turn it off pretty quickly. Had the good Buckhorn oatmeal for breakfast. Beautiful day, high 60's to 70-tootled along I-86 to I-90, went around Cleveland and onto the turnpike, feels strange to go 65 and be able to! (The speed limit for trucks is 55). Not much to see that is new-it's Ohio and Indiana. Debate with self and then said, "Well, you are taking this trip to do some camping so do it!" stopped at Indiana Dunes SP campsites. Started to set up the tent and was moving it and the table here and there to decide where to set up and guys across the way came over to help-well, hey, if it makes 'em feel good! The campground is nice but sites are on top of each other. Oh well. Trying new bbq for supper, 'lite the bag' charcoal did not want to lite. Walked around for a little bit, read and went to bed. The air mattress is quite comfy.

**Sunday, 9/21:** Woke up several times - guy in next tent snoring (just like in the NJ ditz's stories), trains nearby (just like home), got cold-get more blankets on and so on. The showers are kinda funky, not very much or very hot water, guess the campground showers are just like truckstop ones. Fix breakfast, take tent down, and drove around to the beach to look around, and got gas and on the road about noon. Nice day early, but then got cloudy and then just after I got into Iowa it rained hard, then cleared, then rained hard, then cleared, all the way across. Stopped at the Iowa welcome center that I could not take a truck in to-nice little antique and old pictures display, got a ½ price beanie dog-but I say it's an artic wolf, it has yellow eyes. Got to the end of Iowa, stayed in a little fuel stop/Subway parking lot for the night-asked the fuel desk girl if it was all right and she said "Ok, but we're not responsible...." and I told her "I try not to ever be responsible myself."

**Monday, 9/22:** Up early to go to Saturn to get the car serviced, waffled around Omaha a bit finding it-the streets on the cross street went from 114<sup>th</sup> to 118<sup>th</sup>, without any 115<sup>th</sup>, but I did find it finally. Then trying to get out, missed freeway entrance in construction, so a lot of turning around, but finally made it to 80 and west. Stopped for gas at Petro and noticed deep scrape, small but to the metal on hood of the car-looks like maybe someone leaned over and ran their belt buckle on it-should I call Saturn customer svc or just wait until I get home and take it to dealer? Have to decide. Stopped at Cabella's in Kearney-it is not as big and fancy as the one in Sidney, but they were having a tent sale and I found fuzzy lined slippers and a shirt. Then I went through town to the Archway Monument, the big thing built to look like an old fort that goes

across I-80. They have a walk through exhibit on the pioneers that is wonderful-actors reading parts of actual travelers diaries and letters, with life size dioramas, movie and slide shows-just awesome. I was almost snuffly. The first story goes from a buffalo stampede on film through the wagon trains up to the railroads, and then there is a second floor-to get you back across the highway-with progress from the railroads through the interstate. There is a railroad trestle that is both stories high, with a simulated train going over it that you would swear is the real thing, noise and strobe lights-very realistic – and a drive-in movie, model of 20's roadside cabins, etc-showing the route of the Lincoln Highway which became Route 30 which became I-80-an old diner-and radar lights by windows to show you the traffic on I-80 and how fast they are going. The hallway out has some tv screens overhead with more of the people quoted and quotes, and a scrim with enlarged pictures of some people, interlaid with stars and stripes-very moving, I am so glad I stopped at it. Went on to Ogallala, and then off the highway and on to the state road up northwest towards Scottsbluff. Stopped at a place called 'Windlass Hill', a very steep if not too tall hill the pioneers are rumored to have 'windlassed' wagons down, although the signs say there is no evidence of that actually happening-it is almost straight up and down steep, though. Walked to the top of the hill, just that little bit gives a true appreciation of what the pioneers went through, walking across the country. There was a neat sod house there as well. On the trail a footbridge goes over a small but fairly deep gully that the signs say it is the result of the wagon train tracks, starting the eroding that created it. Then on to Chimney Rock, the visitor center was closed but the road to near the rock is open so drove there, you cannot get all the way to the rock itself, probably just as well given the actions of many tourists, but close enough to appreciate the size and the meaning that it had for the people. There is a graveyard there, with some pioneer and some newer graves, one of the pioneer ones was a woman nicknamed 'Wee Granny', and it had a new stone given by her family in 2001. Then came on to Scottsbluff, and it is too late to find a campground so treated myself to a motel and a real dinner at the Applebee's next door. Starting to get lots of pictures already, in the Archway exhibit, also at Windlass Hill and the rock and graveyard at Chimney Rock-one of the rock with nice muted sunset colors behind it-it was getting dark but they should come out ok.

**Tuesday, 9/23:** Quite warm and windy today. Did the 'continental breakfast' at the motel-took a while to find the tea in another room, but I did. Then wandered around finding Scotts Bluff monument-bought a year's pass to the National Parks, figured I will use a bunch of it on this trip and if I don't use it all up, it's a good donation. Next year I qualify for a 'golden age' lifetime pass.

Watched the film on the monument, and then drove to the top-figured in my shape I shouldn't try to walk the 1.6 miles just up-and it is UP. Glorious views from the top, nice trails to wander around-Very Windy up there-the pioneers probably did not climb the rocks, simply because of the time it would have taken, but it was a landmark for them, meaning they were done with the tedious trip across the plains and ready for a new stage of their journey, the mountains. Walked out a trail that goes to where the trail was, there are remnants of wheel ruts, also two replica covered wagons and got some pictures of them. The view from the top of the rocks is 360 degrees if you walk around the whole top, and you can see Chimney Rock to the east and Laramie Peak to the west, two other landmarks. Still a lot of flat land. Then drove around some dirt roads to see Roubideaux Pass, a ways to the west. It was the pass that was used before the one at Scotts Bluff was developed; along the road there were three pioneer graves, in a fenced plot with a plaque-a lonely spot with constant wind-a lonely place to be forever. Also the

remnants of a covered wagon, also fenced in so I wonder if it is authentic? Never found the ruins of the trading post, either I took a wrong turn or they are all gone.

Kept going north then on the state road (after finding a Walmart for more film and a watch, mine died) and went to the Agate Fossil Beds, but did not take the walk to the beds themselves, it was late and I was hot and tired. Watched the movie, and looked at the replica exhibit in the visitor center-some amazing finds. Turned back east for a ways along Route 20-yes, the same one as here-there are some very scenic spots along this stretch of it, with high bluffs and rocks and all. Also saw a snake on the roadway, but I swerved and did not go back to see if it was a rattler. I think the guy in front of me did, which was fine because he was driving about 35 mph all over the road anyway.

Went on to a campground in a state park at Chadron NE, had just enough light to get the tent set up, cooked supper and went to shower because I felt sweaty and gritty from the sun and wind. Had tea and went to bed, then had to get up and pee x2 during the night. Got Cold! I was bundled up tight, made myself feel warmer when I covered up my head. Nebraska gets quite hilly, there is a National Forest-the campground was pretty with some views of the rock formations, but noisy with traffic all night, it must have bent around back to by the highway. Sign of the Day: On many fence posts along the road, old tires are hanging, with "No Hunting" and "No Trespassing" painted on them.

**Wednesday, 9/24:** Up early because I was cold, and there were cows mooing and roosters crowing. Headed east and then north to SD. Immediately you go across the state line you are in a Lakota Souix reservation, stopped for gas in a place all Indian run and staffed, and got some souvenirs, of course. At the turn-off on a road north towards the Badlands there was a big sign about Chief Crazy Horse, so I stopped and wrote what was on the sign, and a woman with a couple of tourists she was showing around took my picture by it. The route from there to the Badlands goes past where the Battle of Wounded Knee/Wounded Knee Massacre was, so I stopped to see that-there is a sort of visitor center, but it is more to promote the AIM (which I think stood for American Indian Movement, can't remember for sure) but it is Indians being a bit militant about getting their land back and so on. The building is where the soldiers were camped, and across the road there are 'kiosks' selling jewelry and so on (like the ones on I-40 in NM) where the Indians were camped. On a hillside to the side of those spots is where the Indians are in a mass grave, there is a monument, in the cemetery to a Catholic church-the guy at the visitor center said that after the FBI/Indian 'war' of 1973 the Indians were supposed to get the land and all of a sudden the church got it instead. There was a special grave, with a marble cover on it and much writing-turned out it was a young Indian soldier who was shot by the FBI because he was helping the Indians in their fight at that time. There were a number of other graves, some with 'real' headstones, some with just a plain old rock, some with wooden crosses. Some of the graves have sticks at each corner with a red, white, black and yellow cloth tied one color to each, lots of plastic flowers stuck in and around the graves, many had teddy bears-many young people, and children, but some of a goodly age as well. Another windy, lonely place-gives one pause to stand there and think about what happened.

Drove north through the reservation towards the badlands, wanted to stop for lunch at a café mentioned in the guide paper but I never did find it. The road is 2-lane and twisty in places; there were many signs along it about a foot square, with the twisted ribbon emblem and "THINK" or "DON'T DIE" on the sign. It wasn't until the next day, past Rapid City that I figured out these are like the crosses in some other places, where there have been fatal accidents.

There were way too many on the road in the reservation. Stopped at a 'trading post' and as I pulled up there was a mare and filly standing along the drive, and the filly came right up to the car and nuzzled it-I said it was because she was a red and white paint and saw the car the same color and thought they were related. Wish I had gotten a picture, but she moved before I could. The guy inside had been to Foxwoods for a PowWow so had a chat about there and other places to go for Indian history and Oregon Trail sites. There also were horses ranging free along the road and I thought that was dangerous for them, and sure enough in one place was one that had been hit – a while ago, sad.

Found the road through the Badlands, by pure accident, I thought I was totally away from it and turned at the end of the road from Wounded Knee and there was a sign to the Badlands, so I got onto a dirt road that led me right up to it! Awesome-one view after another-some turnouts with plaques with history of the rocks and area. Immediately I got across the cattle guard and into the park, there were herds of buffalo; several right next to the road and sure enough a heifer walked across right in front of the car. I got around it, and a car coming the other way (that was watching the buffalo and almost drove in to me) had another one walk in front of it so I decided they must take turns –“C’mon, I walked in front of the last one, it’s your turn”. Further along, at a turnout for the ‘prairie dog village’, there was a lone bull-I stopped just after what must have been a ‘photo tour’ group got there, they were hauling cameras and tripods and lenses out of the cars like mad and setting up-well, this big buffalo bull came wandering by, right up to the parking area, and so everyone forgot about shooting prairie dogs and focused on him-they got closer than I thought was wise but what do I know-one guy who I took to be the leader knew enough to stay back-then the bull walked across the road and down into the rocks and they went trooping after-right through the grass where the signs say to watch out for rattlesnakes. One couple was so busy getting their equipment set up they never did get any shots of the buffalo, I don’t know what they did take a picture of. Anyway, just kept driving through and saw more rocks, more formations, more views, more buffalo-and a bunny. One pass is Bigfoot Pass, after the Indian chief who was head of the Wounded Knee tribe, they came through the pass in the snow just before the massacre. Found a motel at the end of the park, went up the road to supper and now I am going to bed with my book and teddy bear crackers.

Sign of the day: In a town along Route 20 – “Hay Springs Motel” and right underneath that “Bill Deal Trucking” – all in the same building.

**Thursday, 9/25:** Woke up early of course, so could take a picture of sunrise on the badlands-from in front of the motel room-went back to the café up the road, used my ½ price coupon on a breakfast Indian taco. Went up to the Visitor Center to see the film, and talked some more to the nice park guy who helped me find the motel last night, and drove to the end of the park, hiked one of the small trails, then turned around, went back to the highway, following the park guy’s advice on the nicest way over to Rapid City and the Crazy Horse area. Got suckered in on a roadside sign for ‘Thunderhead Falls’, it was a pretty ride in to it and the outside falls was small but pretty, the Thunderhead Falls is at the end of a mining tunnel, sort on interesting but doubtful about being worth \$5. Anyway, a pretty ride into the Black Hills, and Hills they are-steep grades, winding curves-but pretty and nice views from on top of some of the hills. Decided to go to Mt. Rushmore after all, since I am here-and glad I did, it is impressive-and also a beautiful ride up to it. Stayed at a KOA campground, won’t make that mistake again, \$25.00 for a tent site! But I didn’t put the tent up because there were gusty winds predicted, as opposed to the strong steady one blowing all day. Went back to Rushmore for the “Lighting of the Presidents”

ceremony in the evening. Just before the entrance there was a mountain goat alongside the road, turned around for a picture and there were two of them, just standing there grazing, then there were a mom and baby one right inside the memorial, just grazing away-they probably have a system just like the buffalo in the Badlands- 'Hey, it's your turn for the tourists tonight, get on down there...' Anyway, for the ceremony, you sit in the amphitheatre, and for about 20 minutes they play 'patriotic' music, then the ranger spoke on Teddy Roosevelt-I guess they must take one a night, and then there was a film on USA and freedom, with something on each of the presidents (and nothing on 9-11 which surprised me) and then everyone sang the Star Spangled Banner (only I was chokey from the film so I couldn't sing which Sara said the people around me must have appreciated) and while that was happening the lights were coming up on the Presidents and then they asked veterans to come down and help 'retire the colors' and it was all quite impressive. Chatted a bit with the woman sitting next to me, she is from Ireland originally and kept talking about how big this country is-well, compared to Ireland it is for sure. Went back to campground and slept in the car-and the gusty winds did come during the night-gusty enough to shake the car so glad I didn't do the tent!

Sign of the Day: In Keystone, SD, near Mt. Rushmore NP, a business named "Buffalo Leather Massage Therapy". Hmm-I'd just rush there.....

**Friday, 9/26:** Pretty cozy in the car for the night, but nippy when I got up to potty about 4:30-got up a little after 7, showered and didn't even try to do tea, with the wind the stove would never have heated water. Cloudy and blustery, feels very fallish. Went down the road to Crazy Horse. That was Wonderful! The sculpture is not even close to finished, the only part done is the face, which was started over 50 years ago! An impressive video, wonderful art work all through the place, excellent museum, Indian crafts, just all round great place. The sculpture is huge, it dwarfs the Rushmore ones. Took the bus ride up to nearer the base of the mountain for a closer view. There were mountain goats up on the sculpture! No blasting today (of course the day I go there) because the blasters are at a seminar on new and better ways to blast. Spent several hours wandering around, had lunch there and finally got back on the road - more of the nice Black Hills scenery and views - the road went through a fire zone, Jasper Fire of 2001, 85000+ acres, you can see the burned areas for miles. Then went over towards Devil's Tower-took a week but I got in to Wyoming! Another nice ride, I took a 'scenic route' that was on one of the websites I found, up over a mountain on National Forest land-6656 feet at the top, with a side trip to a fire tower with awesome views, then it went down through lots of forest, with lots of deer and some wild turkeys, and got into farm land and then started getting views of Devil's Tower (even though I think it was not the road on the web site at that point)-but when I started out after stopping to take some pictures, all of sudden there was a big ol' Peterbilt with a flatbed full of the big round bales of hay roaring up behind me, so I stopped to let him by right away. Some cool views of the tower, then onto the main road and after turning the wrong way at first I found it -took the walk around the base of the tower, saw a porcupine-right after the sign saying what wildlife was in the park, including porcupines-and got some great views of the tower-another awesome sight. All around the bottom are pieces that have broken off, I measured one and it is at least 10 feet across and 50 feet long. The Indians think the tower is a sacred place, and at least one spot had some of the prayer cloths tied onto sticks set up, and there were signs saying not to disturb such things. Nice walk through the forest all around the rock. Some climbers were on it. Stopped on the way out to call Lynne, talked for a bit, then on back south to Newcastle, decided on a motel for the night, because no likely looking campgrounds around.

Went to the local Pizza Hut, got in to brief chat about going to Crazy Horse with waitress and another customer, a girl on a Harley going up that way to meet up with her mother. Good supper, and to motel, that the waitress recommended-and there is the Harley right next to my room.

Sign of the Day: At Crazy Horse Monument, their motto – “Never Forget Your Dreams”.

**Saturday, 9/27:** Head south to Fort Laramie-Jeanie was right, it is very impressive-some of the ruins of the old buildings, and some building they have restored/are restoring-if you listen you can hear the horses stomping and the orders being called. They play the bugle on the hour. On the way in I stopped at the old bridge across the North Platte River, built in the 1800's and used until the 1950's; and also at a plaque commemorating a Thoroughbred horse, the first one in the west, that was ridden 236 miles in two days, from Fort Phillips (?) to Fort Laramie because the first fort was under Indian attack and needed help-in December in below zero weather-it died of exhaustion, no wonder-sad. From the fort went to Register Rock and the Wagon Ruts WY state monuments, both most impressive-I wonder if those people ever imagined that 150 years later people would be driving thousands of miles to read their names? Or that the tracks of their wagons would still be visible, and people would be coming to see them? Caught I-25 down to Cheyenne, and then Happy Jack Road up towards Sherman Mtn. Then I saw a sign for Vedauwoo Road, and happened to think that was the exit off I-80 by the rocks I want to see, so I turned around and took it, another washboardy dirt road but it went into the forest and the rocks and each view was better than the last-glorious golden aspens against the granite rocks and green pine trees-gorgeous. Noticed some pickups with campers pulled off on side tracks into the woods and wilderness. Then I had to pee and followed one of the tracks, but there was a camper at the very end of it, so went on a bit further and there was a track into the trees so I took it and it was real short, looped around and there was a nice flat spot with a fireplace already ringed out with stones-and a beautiful beaver pond down the hill, and some big rocks to hide behind to pee, so I thought it looked like home for the night. Built a fire, heated leftovers, and sat by it and watched the stars-so clear and crisp. There is a little falls at the end of the beaver pond, and some rapids going into it that you could hear-could just hear the traffic on I-80, and the trains going up the mountain. Didn't put the tent up, slept in the car and was quite warm enough under my blankets-even though it got into the low 30's. Bit nippy when I got up and went into the woods to potty.

Signs of the Day: along Route 85, south of Newcastle, WY – “Eat Beef – Goshen Cattle Women”. Also, on the bandstand in the town park in Lingle, WY “Small But Proud” and “Land of the Free Because of the Brave”.

**Sunday, 9/28:** ‘Broke camp’ and went on out of the rocks, then went down into the ‘official’ Medicine Bow National Forest, hiked one trail there, took more pictures-each formation is more awesome than the last. Then went across the interstate to the Ames Monument-commemorating the two brothers who gave the idea and much of the money for the first intercontinental railroad. Took the side road to the top of Sherman-to an overlook that looks down on the rest area there-and on in to Laramie, stopped at Walmart for more film, and at Pilot for gas and went on out Route 30 and then up north towards Independence Rock. Stopped to take pictures of some pronghorn antelope and a sheriff stopped to see if I was all right and we got into a chat about his son being in college in Boston and the east and all that. Along the road at a turnout several horse trailers were parked, the cowboys had been out on the range, but now they were all sitting around

the trailers in folding canvas chairs, that was cute. Independence Rock is very impressive, it is huge, and right next to the trail, probably why the pioneers picked it out of the many other formations to signify July 4. Walked around it, saw more names carved into the unknown forever-and a small fenced plot that is probably pioneer graves. Stopped at the view area for 'Devil's Gate', and walked that trail to read the markers. Then stopped at the 'Sun Ranch', a ranch started along the trail in 18??, it has been taken over by the Mormons, because it is the site of two of their 'handcart' parties being rescued...quite a tale, but the people's own damn fault-it was interesting, but a bit too Mormonized to suit the average tourist like me. Decided to skip going south to see 'Sweetwater Pass' and the monument near it-a 60 to 80 mile round trip and most likely just another high prairie pass. Headed north towards Teton and Yellowstone, will see how far I get through those tomorrow. Stopped in Lander to call Sara, then went on to Dubois, went into an Exxon/convenience store to ask about a good motel (campgrounds way off route and no showers at them) and went across the street as recommended-good price and my own little 'cabin'. There is a quilt on the bed instead of a 'hotel special' bedspread. The woman at the counter in the store was having a conversation with another woman who came in about deer hunting and bow hunting. The place also had a "Jackalope Store" attached, with all sorts of jackalope trinkets and a big one to put a quarter in and get a ride on. Upstreet to the 'Cowboy Café' for supper, a great big plate of liver and onions that looked huge but I finished it anyway, and brought mountain berry pie home. Took a little walk around town, chat with two hunters changing a flat tire on their pickup. Everyone in the café was either a cowboy or a hunter-and knew everybody else, except me, reminded me of the Bakery.

Signs of the Day: Flyers in the café for a \$1000 reward for the 'coward who shot a dog', and for a 'popcorn tasting'.

**Monday, 9/29:** Up and shower and went across the street and got tea and hot water. Went on towards the Tetons and Yellowstone and stopped along the road at the Tie Hack monument - to the guys who cut railroad ties from the pine trees there, pulled out the folding chair, made my oatmeal and had breakfast. The views get better and better going towards the peaks, turned down the road running parallel to them and right away there was a herd of buffalo on one side of the road and a herd of horses, wild or not?, on the other. Stopped at 'Cunningham Cabin', an old homestead, then at the Snake River overlook-signs explaining the 'terraces', the way the land formations were worn by the different widths and forces of the river; to the visitor center and then through the park itself, the road seems to go right along the base of the peaks, awesomely high and rugged. Many picture stops. The same road runs right to Yellowstone, a stretch in between is the John D. Rockefeller Jr. Memorial Highway. You start seeing the scars from the big fires in 1988 along there, but there are many seedlings of various sizes filling in the land-it just will take so long for them to grow, and then there will be another fire. Made a few photo stops, then found a campground and site, set up the tent, read all the bear warnings, found some firewood, took a walk by the lake, went back and started a fire-several times-to cook supper, ate, sat by the fire which by then decided to burn nicely. Two guys in the next tent gave me some wood, and then they had a huge fire going, so I said I knew why they were so generous. Made sure to put everything away in the car, because of bears. Went to bed, and was all snuggled in thinking ""Wow, I'm camping in Yellowstone!" when I heard a grunting/snorfling noise and sat right up and said "Oh F\*&^ - a Bear!" Then I heard it again, and then again and finally figured out it was one of the guys in the next tent snoring! Boy did I feel silly to myself! REALLY COLD-and I noticed that I never thought about the air in the air mattress being as cold as the rest

of the air-I was pretty cozy except for that and my feet-had my red chamois shirt wound around my head. Then I had to get up and pee in the night and kept expecting to have a bear jump out at me all the way to the potty – beautiful night, though.

Sign of the Day: In the Exxon in Dubois, by the coffee counter where the hunters, cowboys and construction guys were putting flavored creamer in their coffee: ‘Starbucks is here’. And in Yellowstone – “Be Bear Aware”.

**Tuesday, 9/30:** Took tent down and made tea and oatmeal-told the guys next to me about the ‘bear’ in the night and they said “Just two old men making night noises”. Headed for the visitor center, with several photo op stops in between, stopped at visitor center, then LOTS of photo stops, again one sight more awesome than the next-walked around a geyser field, then went to see Old Faithful, then around to the “Grand Canyon of Yellowstone” and the waterfalls, there are about 6 viewpoints for them, each just stunning. The canyon is deep and narrow, with sandstone and yellow colored walls, and lots of formations. Saw ducks on the lake, and elk as I was pulling off the highway into the Old Faithful area, a bull lying down and several cows, then on the way out there was a bull, maybe the same one, standing by the road, so I stopped and got out to get a shot and went across the road and it went over to the side the car was on, as I was walking back to it, and stood there between me and the car-then ambled off. On the way to the waterfalls, saw more buffalo, did not stop for pictures because I have Badlands and Teton buffalo, then more elk, and coming back down from the falls a coyote was in a bare spot alongside the road, with scads of people stopped to look at it, probably thought it was a wolf, at first look it might have been, but it was a coyote. Lots of buffalo and elk out feeding at sunset.

Stopped at Norris geyser field, and walked around, one acted like it wanted to erupt, it kept spurting water spouts but that was all-Steamboat Geyser, that is supposed to shoot higher than Old Faithful. There was another woman there, talking to a tourist couple, then later she spoke to me, asking if I was traveling alone and we talked about how nice that is to do, except that you don’t have anyone to share the memory with. Drove out of the park, seeing more animals, elk and buffalo but never did see moose or bear. Going out of the park, the town of West Yellowstone MT starts right out of the park, asked about a motel but when I went to the one suggested, no one answered the bell, looked around and it looked touristy-expensive so went down the road 40-50 miles, pulled in to a ‘corner bar’ looking place called “A Bar-Motel-Lounge” and got a room and good supper, and here I am. Turns out it is right on a nice river, in a big hunting and fishing part of the state, very pretty.

**Wednesday, 10/1:** Went across the street from the motel and got nice English tea, and a couple of cards and a cinnamon bun, then went on down the road, stopped for pictures along the river, then saw one of the scenic byways I had found on line so I took it and saw a couple of waterfalls, hiked a little bit down to one; the other you cannot get to, it is down in a gorge, but there is a wonderful view of it and cliffs and trees and all, and there was a guy at the viewpoint with a nice big black dog, and he (the guy) was playing a guitar and looking at the falls. Went back to Route 20, to Twin Falls, got onto the interstate, just starting to pass a truck and the exit was right there-anyway, got going West on 20, stopped to call Lynne right by a field where someone was spreading manure, nice ‘reminds me of home’ smell, went back in to town to get gas, and went on to the Craters of the Moon. The highway goes past a couple of ‘towns’ that are atomic energy research centers, where the very first atomic reactor was built (who knew?). The Craters of the Moon was interesting, the lava fields are nowhere as big as the ones in Oregon, but interesting,

different types of formations, and a cinder mountain to hike up, not very high but steep enough to warrant a few stops on the way up and a lot of puffing at the top. Continue on Route 20 through middle of Idaho, more interesting scenery including a stop on top of a pass overlooking an expanse of more mountains, in one spot it sure looked like there was a wild fire going on. Came to the interstate at Mountain Home, so stopped at the Pilot for gas and some supper, and spend 40 minutes on the phone with Sara, Jon Shor had a fire at his house and they got there just in time to get him out, the smoke was down to his eyes when guys got inside. Saved most of the house, but a lot of damage anyway, and Sara and the medic took Jon to the hospital as there was no where else for him to go. Sara starts EMT class tomorrow. Went on as far as Farewell Bend, went in to the state park there and got a nice spot by the river, was sitting out enjoying the night and a dog started yipping and then a couple of coyotes in the hills answered him, howling. Pretty cool. Warm night.

Sign of the Day: In Rigby, ID – “Home of Phillip T. Farnsworth, Father of TV” and “Fremont County TV and Pioneer Museum”.

**Thursday, 10/2:** So warm I had trouble sleeping, and woke up later than I wanted, plus the wind started blowing kind of hard and I had to get up and cover up the stuff I had put outside of the car and then strap it down with bungee cords so the plastic didn't blow off. Showered and had some breakfast, and waved to the people next to me as they pulled out. Stopped at the truck stop for tea, and went on into Baker, to the Historical Museum in town, and as I was going in, there were my campground neighbors going out, and stopped to comment they recognized me from there. The museum was quite interesting with things about the gold mining there and lumbering as well as lots of very nice old things. Then went on to the Flagstaff Hill Oregon Trail museum, and there was the couple from the campground again-they said they were going to the Mexican restaurant in town next and I said I wouldn't be going there. That was very nice also, with life size dioramas like the Archway, of the wagon trains, with recordings of the 'people' talking about what they were doing, one of a woman burying her child that had fallen off a wagon and been crushed, others of men getting a wagon out of the mud, and so on-at one point there is a stretch of uneven rutted cow and horse and people tracked 'dirt' across the floor so you can see what it was to walk on that trail for 2000 miles. Went in to see the 'live show', it was a monologue by a woman supposed to have taken the trail as a 'mail order bride', it could have been interesting if she could act at all, but it put me to sleep. From there went down along a nice 'scenic drive' southwest through more mountains and next to more rivers with more views, just breathtaking - and on to the highway to Bend with more of the same-stop for gas and called Sissy to say I thought it would be about 2 hours, and then just after that the road turned into a narrow, windy twisty thing that was 35 and 40 mph speed limits-very pretty but not to make any time on. Stopped at an overlook of the John Day Fossil Fields, there were two couples there, with the men telling the women all about it, and one man commenting on how people don't clean up after their dogs, and then the women got dutifully into the back seat-what a way to travel! The road from that point went into a narrow, steeply walled canyon that was fascinating, as much as I could take a glimpse of, and kept the turns and narrow part up most of the rest of the way to Bend. Got there about 8:45, visited a while and bed.

**Friday, 10/3:** Visited some more, then went with Sissy to meet Mary, and spent the afternoon with her doing horse things, feeding and cleaning and going back for the trailer, she had the horses at two places but decided to move two of them so they would be together, so we put them

in the trailer and took them across town - a lot of 'Mary' back and forthing-a nice enjoyable afternoon doing 'horse shit', and visiting. Back to Sissy's about 8:30, and had some tasty chicken and nice wine for dinner and now it feels like bedtime-Mary and one of the kids have to get up early to go to a horse show and I know that will wake me up.

**Saturday, 10/4:** Yup, I woke up before they got up, and lay there thinking that they need to get up so they won't be late to meet the other horse show people. Sort of dozed off after for a bit, got up, Sissy going to take the other two kids to a story-telling, so I went and found a place to leave my film to develop-asked the guy if he could do it in an hour, and when he asked how many rolls I said 22-he did not have much sense of humor-ended up having them send it out, and I can pick it up Monday. There was a Mongolian bbq place next to the store so I had some lunch there, and then went back to the house and we took the two kids and went to the Newberry Lava Beds, south of Bend, to see the obsidian lava flow, it is a big blob of three kinds of lava, and one is the black, smooth, shiney obsidian rock, from little pebbles to great big boulders of it, along with the grey and brownish lava and pumice. Then we went to Paulina Lake, and watched ducks on the water for a while, and then we drove up to the top of the mountain, Paulina Peak, 7,000+ feet-a narrow windy hairpin road with a 360 view from the top, awesome-you could see the distant peaks, the lakes, and where the rain was coming down in places in the valley. Called Jeanie from the top of the mountain because I had cell service up there. Back to the house, gave the kids drive-thru burger king, Sissy had a party that she had forgotten about so I had frozen chicken pie, sat and talked for a bit and went to bed, this was my night to not sleep, so played computer games and read.

**Sunday, 10/6:** Went to breakfast with Sissy, Mary, and the three kids-Mary said we needed a few more dogs and kids and I said maybe a couple of ferrets as well. One kid spilled her milk shake and Sissy spilled a cup of syrup. Then went down to Reggie's, went through Santiam Pass, saw where the fires were this summer, stopped at Shahalie Falls for pictures. Such a nice ride. Visited a while, Eugene came out, and then we went in to the city for Reggie's opera concert, which was quite nice for what it was, Reggie being one of the best overall people in it. Went out for food after, met some of the opera people including the artistic director and his wife who are both nice folks, then back to the house and visit a bit more and to bed.

**Monday, 10/7:** Visit a bit more, then back up to Bend, went up the MacKenzie Pass this time, past the lava beds and on the little twisty road that is so much fun and so pretty. Went to the High Desert Museum, would have been nice to have more time there, but got to see most of it, very nice. Then went to Sissy's, and Mary and I went to dinner, Sissy had an art class and met us, having a very good Italian meal in a very comfy place. Visited a little more and bed. One of the dogs came to keep me company during the night, licking first my hands and then itself for about an hour.

**Tuesday, 10/7:** Up early and finally got in to my email and checked, no earthshaking messages, sent a quick one to Monica. Headed down towards Crater Lake to meet Eugene for a day of photo fun there. Had a very nice lunch at the Crater Lake Lodge, a lovely old building, and nice drive around the rim road, stopping here and there to take pictures, climbed down a steep slope to get to some neat White Bark Pines (or WBP's as Eugene said), the twisty trees that make such neat shapes. I said we had better watch out because if we slid it was gonna be a cold dive into

the lake. It is another stunning sight, clear, clear water and the rock formations and trees and cliffs. A very nice afternoon of visiting and photo fun. Then we went our separate ways, me heading south out of the park, stopped a couple of times for more pictures and then stopped for supper at the little truck stop just south of Klamath Lake where we sat broke down in the truck one afternoon, and for the night in a rest stop just south of there.

**Wednesday, 10/8:** Went on south on Route 97, stopping a few times for pictures of Mt. Shasta, and then found the road that goes up the mountain so drove that up to where it stops at about 7,900 feet, and that was lovely. Had my picnic lunch and started back down, stopped at a nature walk by the road – amazing views of mountains across the valley, lakes and all. Back down, and found the road Reggie told me about that goes across the mountains, which was also lovely-I am od'ing on mountains and trees here – found another place to take more pictures of Mt. Shasta. A short part of the road was the one I took the truck across the mountains on one night, going down the mountain into Susanville. Stopped at Halleluah Junction, but I think they put up a new building since the night I went through, it seemed different. Called Lynne and then went on down to Reno, found a motel with a coupon discount, checked in and went to the casinos downtown, played a bit and lost of course, got some Vietnamese noodles and took them back to the room for supper and watched tv.

**Thursday, 10/9:** Found the Saturn dealer and got the car serviced, after calling them and being told it should be done every 3000 miles regardless of how much time it has been. The place was nice, with two girl 'greeters' and a fireplace in the lounge-but no donuts. Got gas and got onto 395 south. Stopped at Mono Lake overlook to remind myself about the surprise of realizing that the tiny road down there is where you are gonna be in a few miles-then went down and found a park to walk in and take pictures of the tufa formations-limestone springs that rose up through the lake and now many are on 'dry land' because the lake is evaporating because the City of LA tapped in to the water supply and drained it down. Then to the turnoff for Yosemite, just below the town, and onto a gorgeous Climb Up into the Sierra to the park-from about 4 or 5000 feet up to 9,926 at the top of Tioga Pass in to the park. Lots of stunning things to take pictures of. Gaspd at my first view of Half Dome, from Ohmsted Visa, and just kept doing it with every view. Got to the valley at dark but was able to see El Capitan and some other things-got a 'tent cabin' after looking for campgrounds and not being able to find them and spent what seemed like hours moving everything food or scented into a 'bear locker', found a snack bar serving pizza or pizza or salad, ate and walked around a bit, had a nice chat with a girl who works at the park, while we watched the moon come up over Half-Dome, and went to bed. The campground backs up to these huge, 3000 foot tall granite cliffs, which also were awesome to see in the full moonlight. It was COLD.

**Friday, 10/10:** Got some tea and hot water, made oatmeal, drove over to Yosemite Village and got my book stamped, andn went through the shops, got some Ansel Adams cards and prints. Then drove down the valley and took the road up to Granite Point-the 3000 foot cliffs that rear straight up from behind the camp. Photo-op stops along Merced River, at pretty Fern Spring, Bridalveil Falls, and several times on the road UP to Granite Point, and again on the way down. Awesome, just awesome. Had a buffet dinner, then tried my own 'moonrise' shots of the full moon and Half Dome, had a cup of tea and went to bed-more prepared for cold and it wasn't as

cold as the night before. Somebody was Very Noisy during the night with a radio or tv and driving through the campgrounds.

**Saturday, 10/11:** (writing Wednesday) Way behind in this-up early and still had to wait for a shower, checked out-had to get a 'bellhop' to do the boxes of bear-safe stuff, even though I know I saw someone with one of the camp carts last night. Anyway, drove out of the park, walked down the 1 mile to the Toulomne Grove of Sequoia trees, quite impressive. It is on the old road, and a man there said he remembered driving through the large cut out tree back in the '60's sometime. Then hiked back UP to the new road, talking with a guy from Florida who wants to buy land in Wassiac (? Why). Several more photo op stops. Stopped to talk to the firefighters, sitting in a turn-out with a pickup and a brush truck watching the managed fires, one flared up a pretty good smoke column and the pickup went to the view area on the other side of the valley, but it was just flaring, not doing anything they were going in after. Guy said he just wanted to sit and listen to sports, he'd been in here 4 weeks with no tv to watch any! Stopped at Ohmsted Point again, hard to get any pictures with all the people clambering around on them, but did get a few. A family going by just as I finished making my sandwich said – "Hey she's got a sandwich, she must know where there's a place to get something to eat" so I told them not until they got to the valley, and they asked "you want to sell that sandwich?" Finally made it out of the park, several rolls of film later altogether, and headed down towards Bishop, a pretty ride that I don't remember most of from going through with the truck, except the big hill just before the town. Found the Mountain Light gallery and it was awesome-Galen and Barbara Rowell photos, some bits about the two of them, and another exhibit, Pat O'Hara, with more gorgeous scenics. There was a reception for him so I got some free munchies. Gawked at the photos a long time, wrote "How tragic that their talents were taken from us; How fortunate that we have these to remember with..." in the book, bought a calendar, and a split density filter for way more than I should spend. Headed out Route 6 for Nevada, and made it to Tonopah, had a good Mexican supper, sitting at the bar so as to not be in smoking section-and to the Clown Motel for the night. Sign of the Day: On Route 6 just out of Bishop, CA – "Provincetown, MA 3205 miles".

**Sunday, 10/12:** Fortified with tea (the woman in the office made me hot water in her microwave) and some mini muffins, headed east on Route 6. Numerous photo op stops, including about an hour at Warm Springs, a ghost town-if only an old bar, unidentified building and a couple of ancient huts qualify for a ghost town. There really is a warm spring, hot in fact, up on the hillside above the town, it runs down in a narrow streamlet that is lined with copper and dark colored deposits at the upper end, then with lots of white what is likely lime deposits until it gets to the road. It goes on down a ways, before going to the 'town' I turned on the 'Extraterrestrial Highway' and about ½ to 1 mile down found a grove of cottonwoods, old fence line, rusted truck cab, corrals and cows to do photos of, then went back to the town and spent time photoing the stone corral, stream, and so on. 4 guys, two on cycles, one in a car and one in a pickup stopped, they were out touring around, from California, turns out one used to live in Schenectady (for about a year), anyways we talked a while. First walked and then drove up the hillside to the start of the spring and stream. Further down the road at Black Rock 'Oasis', found out that the small building and fenced area are a swimming pool, the whole town belongs to a rancher and he used to charge for using the hot pool but it got too much trouble so he quit. My 'biker buddies' were there too, so we had lunch under a tree and talked some more and they petted the buffalo that were the people's pets. Few more photo stops, got as far as I-70, spent the night in the back lot of a travel stop in Salina, Utah.

Signs of the Day: Along Route 6 in Nevada – “Next Gas 90 miles”. Also, Route 6 is named “Grand Army of the Republic Highway”. And “Golden Arrow 12 miles”, “Silver Bow 21 miles”.

**Monday, 10/13:** Made the ‘grave tactical error’ of thinking I could just bop down to Arches National Park and spend a couple of hours and hit the road again. Wrong, firstly it took about 4 hours to go 130 miles on the interstate because there are so many photo ops stops-including one at the top of a pass with magnificent views and a narrow neck of rock to walk out on-it was giving me a queasy feeling and I finally figured out it was because it was narrow enough that you could see the ground 20 or 30 or 40 or more feet down moving out of the corners of your eye as you walked. Set up my chair and went to make lunch and the wind almost took the chair right over the edge, that woulda been cute! Finally made it to the park by about 3, and when the sun set I still hadn’t gotten all the way to the end. Not only the arches but all the formations are just unbelievable, so many of them and so many things to gawk at and photo. Hiked in to some of them for close-ups, and to the old ranch and petroglyphs but decided against going all the way up to Delicate Arch and was just as glad when I got to the end of the trail to the view point-there were more people than in Times Square at rush hour! Stopped at twilight in a picnic area and lit the barbeque to fix supper, then drove out in full dark, and the formations under the just past full moon were as awesome as in the daylight-and what a feeling to be alone there in the dark! Oh, my! The campground in the park was full, so I went to one back up the road a few miles and put in for the night.

There is a great radio station nearby playing oldies and country and a lot of real neat music – and does their call letters “KBAL, Price, Utah – United States of America”.

**Tuesday, 10/14:** Opted to not go back to Arches, but instead went to Dead Horse Point State Park-after several view area stops and a detour several miles down a dirt road to ‘Dubick’s Well’, a windmill and water tank looking like it has not been used for a long time, but giving some fine photo ops. Apparently you can just pull off the road and camp, that would be cool. Found a great view-with no other people-for breakfast; went into the park and the view from the point is as awesome as the pictures make it look. Mine won’t be great because the sun was wrong, but what can ya do? Old lady puffing for breath stopped me to ask would I tell an ‘older man and red haired girl’ that she was at the car-she didn’t look like I’d want her walking around by herself, I did find them and they said oh, the puffing is normal, but she does wander and ‘she falls’-well, if she wandered the wrong way and fell she’d go 2000 feet down, but not my concern. Also a family I hit a couple of views with had a boy about 8 who wanted to take a stick, and they quietly explained why he couldn’t, then an older boy took out a robot car and they told him put it away because the noise was annoying to other people-I went up and thanked them for teaching their children how to act in public! Finally got out of that park, and back down the road to head to the interstate, got onto another ‘scenic byway’ that wound along the Colorado River through a magnificent canyon of red cliffs and river views and rock formations, so of course more photo stops-but I did make it to I-70 and then to Colorado after a while. Not saying the road was close to the cliffs, but in a lot of places the reflectors alongside the road were nailed right into the rocks! At the first town I stopped at the visitor center, and there was a hot air balloon floating down across the highway. Went for a real dinner for a change, got Rocky Mountain trout because I am in the Rocky Mountains. Went a bit further down the road, pulled in to a truck stop that I remember stopping at the one time years ago I came through here, but

decided against staying there, went a ways further and spent the night at a rest area loaded with trucks, felt nostalgic.

**Wednesday, 10/15:** Woke up with a big ol' Kenworth nosed up to my Big Girl. Trying to head east, but keep taking photo stops- a cute little park along the Colorado River (in canyons here that have various pine trees, and granite outcroppings) where there were tiny ice drops off the yellow aspen leaves. Tried to find the tourist info in Glenwood Springs, where there are cute little brown woodsy signs that you can't read, and when I did find one that I thought I could follow to find somebody that knew something, it pointed Left but there was a no left turn sign. Finally did get to the city hall, where they gave directions to the Chamber of Commerce, that I had gone past but didn't know it because the sign is behind some trees, and got some info, found a Walmart for more film, and the Memorial to the firefighters caught in the forest fire near here several years ago. Having lunch at a lovely spot above the river and trying to catch this up. I-70 goes through the noted Glenwood Canyon, a narrow, narrow canyon about 20 (?) miles long that is just gorgeous (when we came here it was night and did not see much of anything) -deep green pines and yellow aspen and the river-there are several rest areas along it with bike and hiking trails-striking. Two women in what looked to be their 70's at least were loading up bicycles and talking about riding the next day-what a great way to get together! Then you get further up into the mountains, over several 7 and 8 and 9 and 10 thousand foot passes, walked around another rest area on top of one pass, then got off I-70 and took old Route 6 over Loveland Pass, I remember going over it when I was doing that magazine sales travel job, and stopping on the top and throwing snowballs, in July I think it was. There was snow way up on the peaks-the pass is 11,990 feet. When I got to the top there were several other cars there, about 5 of them that looked the same, one was silver colored and the others were dull 'primer' black, no markings or anything, and Michigan 'manufacturer' plates on them, must have been test cars for somebody, I didn't recognize them from the shape. Eased down the pass and back on to I-70, through more scenery, stopped to take pictures of an old mine, then to try to see bighorn sheep, but there were none out, well I thought I saw one but couldn't really tell. Stopped again on top of the mountain just before Denver, scooted off the road to get pictures of the marvelous sunset-to the 'Buffalo Overlook' which actually overlooks buffalo herd in a city park, but found a pull off to get shots from-and a hippie guy who wanted to talk and talk. Called Sara to tell her I won't be home until Saturday, hung up and Stephen called me back just to say hi. Made it into Nebraska, to Big Spring.

Signs of the Day: Going down the mountain in to Denver at the top were the usual "8 miles 6% Downgrade, Truck Use Lower Gear", then a ways down where it leveled out "Truckers Don't Be Fooled - 5 miles 6% still to go" and then again "You're Not There Yet Truckers - 3 miles 6% left".

**Thursday, 10/16:** Not much sightseeing. Stopped at Oglalla and went to 'Boot Hill' and walked around that for a little bit-quite small but still a neat thing. Did stop at the 'cookbook outlet' store in Kearney and got some for gifts, and tried to find some places to get pictures, but there isn't much in Nebraska-or Iowa that I haven't already done, but I did get a nice sunset finally on 680 east of Omaha. Stopped for gas before Des Moines and was walking out as a flatbed driver was walking in-he came back out and took off in a big hurry, but later I caught up with him, then he got ahead again, then the other side of Des Moines he was talking with some other drivers about me and I caught up again, he mentioned 'that lady's smile' and I said 'Honey

if that grandmother's smile did that much for you, you need to get home more often'-and he told me he noticed me at the gas station and thought I looked like I had a 'Cowgirl Attitude'-I took it as a compliment. Then we talked for a while through Iowa, and I got ahead of them and made it to the first rest area in Illinois for a short, cold night.

**Thursday, 10/17:** Had a real breakfast at a truck stop, and just drove turnpikes until past Toledo, and got off for chicken liver dinner at Petro, then took Route 2, stopped at a pretty National Wildlife Refuge and saw lots of geese and ducks and a couple of egrets and herons, got pictures and took a bit of a walk. Made it to past Erie for the night.

**Saturday, 10/18:** Took a little drive to try to find a place to take a picture of Lake Erie from, but there wasn't really anyplace, and it would have been a gray sky and gray lake and dull trees anyway, so didn't bother. Lot of vineyards around there. Took the thruway home, blondes kept doing stupid driving things-pass and slow down, then speed up again when you pass them, and so on. Sort of a cloudy day and chilly. The leaves are past peak here, there was still some color, but not enough to stop for pictures, I can get some home maybe. Have to finish off rolls of film. Stopped at Saturn to get the car serviced but I would have had to wait because it needs it's 6000 mile checkup, I said they should do the 9000 one at the same time, but the guy didn't understand the humor of that. Anyway, made an appointment for Monday and came home, stopped at the squad to see Sara and at Eckerd to leave off the film and came home and unloaded most of the car and then had to go to the grocery store to get cat food. The girls are glad to see me, and I am glad to see them.