

Utah Journal

By Betsy Breiding

March 29th to April 1st 2014

Saturday, March 29th, 2014

We thought we had packed almost everything the night before, but it was absolutely amazing all the odds and ends we found that still needed to be stowed someplace. So we were packed to the gills when we drove out of the driveway of 750 La Huerta about 6:30 a.m.

Up through Tucson and on through Phoenix, we headed north in Arizona. We drove through some gorgeous areas and just about when we were ready to stop for the day, we came to "Monument Valley" around Kayenta. (Forgot to mention that earlier we came through the Painted Desert - beautiful in shades of pink). We stayed there in a motel called the Wetherill Inn. We were very glad that Mike had marinated and grilled all the rest of our chicken breasts in Green Valley. So we had salad with delicious grilled chicken breasts in the hotel room rather than having to go out and track down an inferior meal. We liked our room, but it sounded like the people upstairs were having a gymnastics competition! We watched a pretty good movie we think was "Crash".

Sunday, March 30, 2014

We awoke early and by 7:00 a.m. were able to hit the hotel's continental breakfast and head up Rt. 193 towards Utah. Beautiful scenery came and went. We were particularly intrigued by the strange geological features around Mexican Hat.

We loved driving into the familiar area and remembered sights of Canyonlands National Park. We found the campground where we stayed on our honeymoon and paid for a campsite for 3 nights. Only problem - too windy to put up the tent. We unloaded some stuff, moved around some stuff in the van, then went to do some sight seeing. We went to the Green River Overlook (walked) just down from our campground. Then we visited the Visitor's Center, then took in the amazing views at the Shafer Canyon Overlook - snow capped peaks behind the walled canyon with a road snaking down through it.

Next out to Upheaval Dome where we almost got blown away! Lots of blowing sand in my eyes!

Now we are sitting in the car, drinking beer and watching things blow around, including the heavy metal trunk we scrounged from Kyle and Karen which blew right off the picnic table!

The van is rocking. We feel like we're in Kansas!

We were hoping the wind would die down so we could set up the tent, but it didn't. So we finally bit the bullet and began struggling with the tent. We had wanted to pitch it in among the junipers as we remembered doing on our honeymoon. But the soil was so hard packed that Mike couldn't get the stakes pounded in. We moved the tent out into the open where the ground seemed softer and were able to get it pitched with large stones holding down extra lines on the fly.

I forgot to mention that before we pitched the tent, we decided to take a walk out to the overlook. Mike was singing a silly song and I was clowning around doing a crazy dance when I tripped over my feet and fell on my knee. Hole in my pants, but luckily not in my knee. It swelled some, but I soothed it with a cold can of beer. (On my knee, not down my throat.) Unfortunately as we were pitching the tent, I tripped over a tent stake and landed on the same knee. Ouch!

Too windy for the propane stove, so we sat in the van and ate cold spaghetti. Not quite what we had envisioned for our first night in Canyonlands, But tomorrow is supposed to be sunny with a high of 57 and just light winds. Sounds like we should be able to handle that!

Sunday, March 31, 2014

Last evening a camper pulled in with 5 kids and took the campsite across from us. The kids screamed and ran around pretty late, with dad yelling at them from inside the camper. Some people just don't think!

The wind had died down overnight. We were up at 6:30 and soon on the road to Moab for an \$18.00 breakfast at "Sweet Cravings". Then it was off to Arches.

The drive in was gorgeous, with monuments and cliffs and gorges. We stopped at several overlooks and pullouts to enjoy the breath taking views.

Our goal for the morning was to hike the trail to Double O Arch, a four mile hike that started at the Devil's Garden trailhead and led past Landscape Arch. I was a little nervous because the hike description mentioned that it was not a good hike for people with extreme fear of heights.

The views were absolutely stunning! Mike's camera crapped out AGAIN, so he got out his big camera to accompany us.

There was some rock scrambling and walking out across narrow "fins" of rock that were rather unnerving, but the ground was not so far away that I couldn't do it.

I think when we were here on our honeymoon we did the whole seven mile hike which included the Primitive Loop.

Out at the Double O Arch we had an interesting conversation with an older man (probably about our age!) who was going to train as a volunteer ranger at the Colorado National Monument. What a fun thing to do!

When we got back to the trailhead, the parking area was absolutely packed. What must this place be like in summer? Yikes!

We decided to drive over to the parking area for the ranch and Delicate Arch to sit and have a bit of lunch before we headed out on our next hike. Not nearly so many cars there.

The 3 mile round trip hike to Delicate Arch led up across a big bald area. Again - spectacular views! But why didn't this hike description mention fear of heights? Right before getting to the arch, we had to hike along a ledge with a sheer drop off on one side. It really freaked me out and I could barely enjoy the Delicate Arch, knowing I would have to go back along that path. I just don't remember that from our hike there on our honeymoon - but as Mike mentioned - maybe it didn't bother me then.

But what a good day with those two glorious hikes! Back at the campground we cooked beans and onions and grilled kielbasa on a juniper campfire where we sat until dusk. Even the kids were much subdued after Mike said something to the dad.

We had decided we would not stay at the campground for the third night as we had previously planned. We would pack up in the morning, hike all day at Canyonlands, then drive up to the interstate (70) to find a motel for the night. So we packed as much as we could that night which was good, because here's what happened the next day. I guess you could say it was Mother Nature playing an April Fool trick on Mike and Betsy.

Tuesday, April 1, 2014

During the night the wind rose again. It was so strong that during some of the gusts we felt that we were the only thing keeping the VE 24 from becoming air born!

By morning there seemed to be no change in wind velocity. We decided that hiking would be impossible so we packed up as best we could and headed for the interstate.

At that point we decided we were on our way home!

Our trip through western Colorado offered more beautiful mountain scenery. There was a lot of snow through the Vail Pass and ski resort areas. I reminisced about my skiing adventures in grad school.

We drove until around 5:00 and ended up at an Econolodge in Limon. Co. Eastern Colorado is flat, flat, flat! ~*Finis*