

Time To Move East!!

The first part of February was spent saying our "Good Byes" and getting ready to move on. I think the person who had the most difficulty with this was Barbara! We all knew what it meant to her to have us all out in Mesa with her this past Winter. Barbara & David had us to their home numerous times and although Barbara would call me the tour director, it was she who came up with most of the ideas of what to do most of the time. Barbara really misses the freedom of the road! Then we all drove out to Buckeye twice for a farewell gathering at Bart & Debbie's place. They too enjoy having their 400 family members to their home. The picture on the bottom left is one of those gatherings at the Day's house in Buckeye.

Bob & I left Apache Junction and moved on to Tucson on February 10th. Here we met up with our friends, Pat & Diane, who were not expecting us. We wanted to surprise them and surprise them we did. We drove by without Diane noticing us and then when I called to her as she walked by a little later, she stood there for a moment with a blank look on her face. We all really laughed about it later. It was here however, that I came down with a version of the flu. That really put a 'damper' on our ability to enjoy the visit and needless to say, both Pat & Diane came down with the bug too, as did Bob. If they don't want to see me for a while, I wouldn't blame them. The weather was still quite chilly and when a rain storm hit, the nearby mountains became snow covered. The bottom right picture is a photograph I took from inside our coach.

From here we moved just down the road a little to Benson, AZ. This was to be the beginning of a series of educational experiences involving *the heavens*. The campground was the Butterfield RV Resort. What made it special was that it had a university size telescope in the campground with a resident amateur astronomer on the grounds to run it. I had come across this campground in my research and thought it would be a neat place to visit. As it turned out we were there the night of the *Lunar Eclipse*. A telescope was not necessary to see the eclipse, but we were able to get some close ups of the moon with it's craters. Besides the moon, we were given an excellent view of Saturn with its rings. What a fantastic view! We lucked out in that it was a fairly clear night. There was a small group of people with us that night as well as people using their own personal telescopes. A perfect night and it was free to the residents of the campground. The pictures on the top of the next page are of the Lunar Eclipse. The first picture is of the moon in the beginning stages. The second picture is of the shadow covering the moon, giving it an orange glow.



Continuing East, we made a return trip to Elephant Butte, NM, arriving on February 22nd. We were glad we did as we were able to see the Managers of the Lakeside RV Park go into retirement! Such nice people! In fact they left before we did. See pictures below. We also learned that the RV Park was sold to the owners of the Elephant Butte Inn just up the road. So many changes in such a short period of time. While there we revisited some of the *old haunts*, such as Casa Taco, the Elephant Butte Inn for Sunday Brunch and The La Cocina Restaurant with their famous sopapillas. We even went back to San Antonio, NM for the Green Chili Cheeseburgers. We hit this Restaurant when we took a days trip to The Very Large Array, a display of radio telescopes in Socorro, NM. This is an amazing sight. It is located over 6,000 feet in elevation on a plateau with mountains around acting as a shield from outside interference. The antennas are 82 feet wide and weigh 230 tons a piece. There are 27 of them spread out over a 22 mile area in the shape of a 'Y'. They can move them about on what looks like railroad tracks. Page 2 of this newsletter will have some pictures. The array actually gives a visual picture to astronomers of the heavens, better than telescopes. It is basically a self guided tour. The high desert is usually very scenic and the trip to and from the Array did not disappoint us. There was an interesting small town about half way up, Magdalena.

On another day we drove south to Hatch, NM, the Chili Pepper Capital of the World! You know that great spice that New Mexico is so famous for. We stopped at a road side stand selling the peppers rather than the more fancy stores, and there were plenty of both! Chili peppers everywhere and it didn't matter if you wanted green or red, hot, very hot or mild they had them all. We actually stopped here after a scenic ride with a stop to see the ghost town, LAKE VALLEY. We never got to see this attraction during the Fall Rally, as it was difficult to know when it was open. The town is on BLM land and there is a full time couple work camping on the site, who we met and had a nice chat with. The site is being maintained as it is, rather than trying to restore it. There are some partial structures and the main building was used as a school, a meeting hall, and a dance hall.



Pictures of the Large Array in Socorro

Pictures of Lake Valley and Hatch, NM



These pictures are to give you an idea of how the dishes were laid out and the size. There are also a couple of pictures of the tractor that moves them along the rails or tracks. Can you imagine driving along US 60 which goes right through here and seeing these things not knowing they were there?



The first picture is of Bruce & Kathy Salsbury, the work camping couple employed at Lake Valley. When we arrived there were only a few people there and we were able to talk with them quite a while about the mining ghost town and about our experiences on the road. This area is quite remote, but they really are enjoying the experience and plan on doing this for two years. The building they are standing in is has functioned as a school, a meeting hall and a dance hall. They note that the ranchers in the area would like to see the dance hall tradition continue but the building is too old and could not withstand the strain.

Then there is the town of Hatch, NM. We stopped here on our way back to Elephant Butte. We stopped at this road side stand and bought chili peppers.