

2010 Albuquerque Balloon Festival

Oops! I forgot about Tucumcari, NM. This should have been in the previous newsletter, as this was our last stop before Albuquerque. We have been to a number of Route 66 towns, but this one is struggling to stay alive. A favorite phrase on billboards and hanging from the lamp posts is "Stay in Tucumcari Tonight". Many of the structures were original, but lacked regular maintenance. In some cases the signs were still there, even illuminated at night, but building structures were long gone. Needless to say many properties were for sale. For us, it stirred images of what once was. We also visited Floeck's Ostrich Ranch, where we had a private tour.

When we arrived at the balloon fiesta campground, we got lucky and got a front row camping spot facing the landing area for the balloons. This was the beginning of an interesting stay in the City of Albuquerque. During the first part of the month we were active participants in the Balloon Festival by crewing with our pilot friend, Danny Campbell. Danny was there with his own balloons, his girlfriend, also named Marie, and other crew members. Besides two Maries, we also had two Bobs. This added to the fun we had together. It kept Danny on his toes as he gave directions! We were also dry camping, which was to be a test of our newly enhanced battery set up and new residential refrigerator. In short, we did very well with this set up over the seven day period. Shortly after we arrived we bumped into Lloyd & Donna Roberts, former HR400 members. They were there for business as well as pleasure, as they do windshield repair. We were also contacted by Carol Mante, a former co-worker of Bob's, who was attending the festival as well. It took a little effort on both our parts to get connected, but we finally did. We also knew that Pat & Roger from Briarcliffe were visiting family in Santa Fe, so after the festival we rode up there to see them before they left for Florida for the Winter.

We stayed to the bitter end and moved over to the Kirkland AFB in Albuquerque on Monday, 10/11. Our plan here was to wait for Henry & Ann to catch up with us. We ended up staying till the end of the month and in the process developed a rich appreciation for this area of New Mexico. It really is beautiful! The Sandia Mountains do it all! There is so much to do in this area, with ample restaurants, stores, you never seem to run out of options. Bob & I love the New Mexican foods and how in the world can you beat five dollars for a lunch buffet at the local Casinos? Sandia Casino itself is so beautiful, set against the Sandia Mountains with its adobe style architecture. We also drove up to Sandia Peak, and picked the perfect day to do so. For a couple of days before, clouds covered the peak and with the cold temps at night, all the trees on top were covered in snow! The views were absolutely spectacular.

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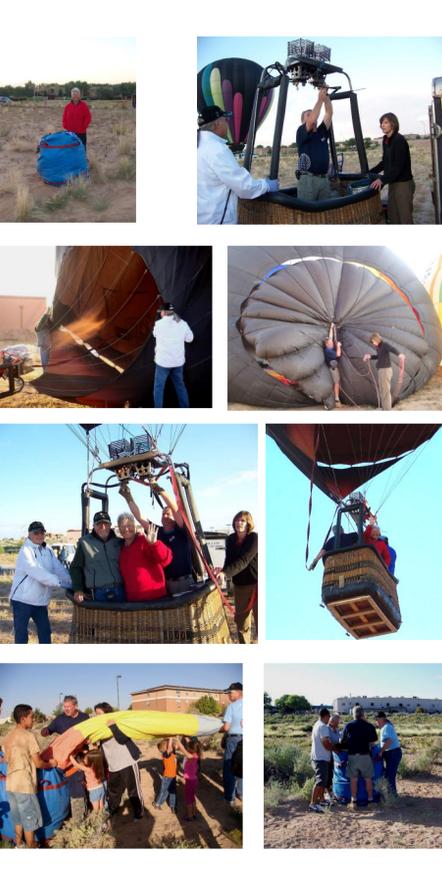
Top 5 pictures: Tucumcari mural on local grocery store; Street view; An ostrich with an attitude; Don't get too close to him, Bob, and watch those feet!

Middle picture; Our coach is in the middle of the front line of coaches with a great view of the field.

Bottom 4 pictures; Danner and Marie #1; "Burnie the Little Devil"; Danny's passenger balloon; Dawn at the Fiesta.

Up, Up and Away!!!

Lloyd & Donna decided they wanted to go for their first balloon ride, and were able to strike a deal with Danny. We were excited as they were. The following pictures tell the story. Danny brought the balloon down next to an early years child care center which made the trip that much more special. The children were thrilled!



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Below are some pictures of other activities. 1) There is a picture of Bob and Carol Mante on the Festival Grounds. 2) Thanks to Danny, we were able to get our picture taken with Brien Jones, who along with Betrand Piccard, were the first men to circumnavigate the world in a non-stop, non-refueled hot air balloon flight. 3) Then the rest of the pictures are of Bob going, "Up, Up and Away, Again!!" Danny invited him to join them in a passenger ride one morning. This ride was for a customer, as was the one Lloyd & Donna took. Bob stands out in his white jacket. The next picture shows that the balloon can come down almost anywhere! With this flight, the crew had to walk the balloon across that field to the back of a public school so the chase crew, Marie #1 and I could get to it with the trailer. The next pictures show the balloon arriving at the edge of the field, deflated and stretched out on a smooth sidewalk.



This trip to Albuquerque was different from our last one, from beginning to end. First of all we spent much more time here after the festival. We visited museums like the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, the Museum of Nuclear Science & History, and drove up to Sandia Peak. We found some great restaurants, like Sadie's (New Mexican food) and believe it or not, a delicious Louisiana style restaurant, Pappadeaux.. There just isn't enough space to tell it all. Next month, its on to the great State of Texas.

"Burnie the Little Devil"



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On the top left are some pictures of Danny's balloon getting ready for flight. Look at the size of those feet!! No, the cow didn't land on our coach, although it looks that way. Wells Fargo Stage Coach came down right in front of our coach one morning and Bob ran out to help until the chase crew arrived. Another landing in front of our coach is below, but was actually at dawn. Then on Kirkland AFB, the parade grounds with the Sandia Mountains in the background. Next our visit with Pat & Roger in Santa Fe and last but not least, a beautiful shot taken on top of Sandia Peak.



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