

Dear Friends and Relatives,

## Greetings again from Redding, California.

Once again, greetings from **Green Acres RV Park** in Redding, California. In this edition, we are still playing catch up with our last five month trip through the Southwest. This time we will share our experiences in the Painted Desert, the Petrified Forest, and the Meteor Crater of Arizona and this will get us up to date.

## New Motorcycle.

Before we deal with the old news, we have to give you the current news. When the motorhome is parked, we have been getting around on our small, single cylinder, BMW motorcycle. This worked pretty well on the back roads, but wasn't getting the job done on the 75 mph freeways of Arizona. We found ourselves not seeing some of the sights because the roads were too fast or the trip too long. It became obvious that we were going to have to get a car or a larger motorcycle. After a few months of car shopping, we didn't find anything that we were in love with. To make a short story long, we opted for a larger bike.



New 2007 BMW R1200RT

Chuck had been eyeing this model for about a year, but had never ridden one. While we were down in **Chico** getting our old bike serviced, we rode the 1200RT. It was amazing as well as beautiful, but the dealer was unwilling to deliver it to Oregon and we weren't about to register it in California. So, we rented a car and drove to **Medford**, Oregon to chat with an Oregon dealer. Chuck is so fussy about his equipment that we expected that we would have to do a factory order and wait several months to get the bike with exactly the options we wanted. But there it was...the perfect

bike, the right color, and exactly the options we wanted. The dealer serviced it, we took it for a ride, and bought it on the spot. The next week, Chuck rode "Little Red" to Medford and then rode "Bonnie" back to Redding in a rainstorm. Riding a brand new motorcycle in the rain is not an ideal start, but the bike is so well mannered that Chuck said it wasn't too bad. It is well behaved and elegantly civilized. The fairings keep most of the wind off, the windshield height and angle is electrically adjustable so that you can send the rain over your head, the handgrips are heated, as are the seats, and the ABS brakes prevent skids.

This is a rock-solid touring bike that really eats up the miles. You turn on the cruise control and just sit there until your butt gets too tired to continue. Speaking of which, tomorrow, Tuesday, May 29, Chuck's birthday, we are having two custom seats made. One tailored to fit Chuck and one custom shaped to fit Donna. If the seats work, it should extend our range considerably past the current 150 mile threshold of pain.

We have a beautiful and refined gal friend in the Bay Area whose name is **Bonnie Silver**. Hey, the bike is beautiful and refined and it is silver. So we named the new BMW "Bonnie."



**Donna, Annika, and Chuck heading to Auburn.**

Last Friday, we took the new bike to **Auburn**, California for three days and two nights. We went to see and be part of the largest and best BMW motorcycle rally in the West. It was unbelievable. There were more than 1,000 BMW motorcycles. Our brand new bike drew no attention at all, but Annika riding on Donna's chest wearing her Doggles, stopped traffic everywhere we went. Everybody wanted to take her picture. Annika loved the attention.

### **One For Dave.**

There were dozens of super interesting motorcycles at the rally, but unfortunately we did not bring a camera. One three wheeler in particular was so interesting that we snapped a picture with our cell phone. We have a special friend named **Dave** in Douglas City who has extensive motorcycle touring experience. However, due to health reasons and poor balance, Dave feels he can't ride anymore. Well Dave, take a look at this elegant solution. This is only the second one we have ever seen. There

is an even better looking one in Hayfork very near you. This beautiful, two passenger, three wheeler is made from a British kit (\$18,000) plus a used BMW four cylinder engine, transmission, drive-shaft, and rear wheel assembly plus a lot of work. Fast, stable, and elegant.



**BMW three wheeler.**

### **Painted Desert, Arizona.**

The Painted Desert in Arizona is definitely worth seeing. It is located on I-40 about 65 miles west of Gallup, New Mexico and about 25 miles east of Holbrook, Arizona. The Painted Desert stretches over 1,500 square miles and is located on both the north and south sides of I-40. The colors are spectacular.



Painted Desert with typical vegetation in foreground.



Painted Desert with non-typical husband and dog in foreground.

**Petrified Forest National Park, Arizona.**

The Petrified Forest is conveniently located right next to the Painted Desert. To be more accurate, the Petrified Forest and the observation points for the Painted Desert are all located inside the 1,500 square miles of the Painted Desert. It is easy to see both in about half a day.



**Petrified logs.**

This is one of the few national parks we have been to that allows dogs on the trails. Annika loves to walk and hike with us and took great interest in this trail through the Crystal Forest.



**Chuck and Annika up close with petrified logs.**



**Wood turned to stone.**

In the neighborhood of around 200 million years ago, this area was very wet and heavily forested. There were trees as large as 200 feet tall and ten feet in diameter. There was a larger river running through this area and after trees had fallen from natural causes, they washed down the river and got stuck in sand bars. The trees were buried under deposits of sediment, slowing down the process of decay. Silica-rich ash spewed from volcanoes was mixed into the sediment. The silica dissolved into the ground water and the solution seeped into the cells of buried trees. Crystals formed in the logs and the wood tissue rotted away leaving behind beautiful mineral fossils. This is a place worth seeing, but don't do it in the middle of summer. Yes, it can get really hot here. By all means, stop at the visitor's center. It's a fascinating place.



**Petrified Forest fossilized animals in the Rainbow Forest Museum.**

You can get a good idea of this whole area by driving the 28 miles from I-40 to Highway 180. With a few pictures, the drive will take about an hour. At the north end, you'll want to spend at least an hour at the Painted Desert Visitor's Center and at the south end of the drive, another hour at the Rainbow Forest Museum. On the other hand, if you're really tough and the weather is cool, you can easily hike

for a day and a half.

At the end of the day, we spent the night at the Elks Lodge in **Holbrook**, Arizona. From the outside, the lodge has kind of the disreputable look of a biker club house. Once you're inside, it's really very nice and we enjoyed our stay.

### **Meteor Crater, Arizona.**

Right up front, yes, it's worth seeing in spite of the fact that it's kind of in the middle of nowhere. Meteor Crater is located off I-40 at exit 233, 35 miles east of Flagstaff and 20 miles west of Winslow in Arizona.



**Meteor Crater from the visitor's center.**



**Chuck and Donna inside visitor's center with the largest meteor fragment found.**

The visitor's center is absolutely magnificent with all kinds of interesting exhibits. They also show a fine movie and give great lectures in a lovely and extremely comfortable theater. Wow, this place doesn't look like a low budget government facility. Well guess what? It's not. Believe it or not, it's

privately owned and well developed with some serious corporate money.



The visitor's center.

The history of this location is as interesting as the crater itself. Let's see if we can give you a little insight into both.

### **The Creation.**

Approximately 50,000 years ago, on a continuous plain extending for miles in the high desert plateau of Northern Arizona, out of the northeastern sky, a pinpoint of light grew rapidly into a brilliant fireball. Hurling about 40,000 miles per hour, it was on a rendezvous course with earth. In seconds, it passed through the earth's atmosphere with little loss of velocity or mass.

In a blinding flash, a huge iron-nickel meteorite or dense cluster of meteorites, estimated to have been about 150 feet across and weighing several hundred thousand tons, struck the rocky plain with an explosive force greater than twenty million tons of TNT. Traveling at supersonic speed, this impact generated immensely powerful shock waves in the meteorite, the rock and the surrounding atmosphere. In the air, shock waves swept across the level plain devastating all in the meteor's path for a radius of several miles. In the ground, as the meteorite penetrated the rocky plain, pressures rose to over twenty million pounds per square inch, and both iron and rock experienced limited vaporization and extensive melting. Beyond the affected region, an enormous volume of rock underwent complete fragmentation and ejection.

The result of these violent conditions was the excavation of a giant bowl shaped cavity. In less than a few seconds, a crater was carved into this once flat rocky plain. During its formation, over 175 million tons of limestone and sandstone were abruptly thrown out to form a continuous blanket of debris surrounding the crater for a distance of over a mile. Large blocks of limestone, the size of small houses were heaved onto the rim. Flat lying beds of rock in the crater walls were overturned in fractions of a second and uplifted permanently 150 feet. Fragments of rock and iron-nickel, some as large as a few feet across, were thrown several miles away. In some of the shocked meteorites, the intense pressures transformed small concentrations of graphite into microscopic sized diamonds. A dense hot cloud rose high above the crater carrying with it droplets of molten iron-nickel, pieces of molten rock, and abundant rock debris. This material rained down as fallout until the cloud drifted away and dissipated to the surrounding area. Meteorite fragments that separated early from the main mass during its passage through the atmosphere continued to fall at lower velocities on the crater and surrounding area during and immediately after the impact. As a result of the impact, the crater floor was 700 feet deep; it is now approximately 550. The crater is over 4,000 feet across and 2.4 miles in circumference.

### **The Discovery.**

There is evidence of the crater being referenced by Native Americans in the area; however a man



named **Franklin**, who served as a scout for General Custer, wrote the first report of the crater in 1871. For years the crater was referred to as Franklin's Hole. Later, local settlers named it Coon Butte, and it was thought to be just another extinct volcano.

### **The 26 Year Search.**

In 1902, **Daniel Moreau Barringer**, a Philadelphia mining engineer, became interested in the site as a potential source for mining iron. He later visited the crater and was convinced that it had been formed by the impact of a large iron meteorite. He further assumed that this body was buried beneath the crater floor. Barringer formed the Standard Iron Company and had four placer mining claims filed with the Federal Government, thus obtaining the patents and ownership of the two square miles containing the crater. This was ten years before Arizona became the 48th state.

In 1903, Barringer came to meteor crater and spent the next 26 years attempting to find what he believed would be a giant iron meteorite. His work and scientific research were carried on with great perseverance and bitter disappointment. Since the crater is roughly circular, it was natural at that time to assume that the body that formed it lay beneath its center. Consequently, the first shaft was started where the low, white mounds of pulverized Coconino sandstone can still be seen on the crater floor. A few small meteoritic fragments were reported in the shaft, but unfortunately, the pulverized sandstone beneath the water table turned to quicksand and prevented mining to a depth where the main body was supposed to lie.

Finally Barringer became convinced that the meteor had come in at an angle (which it had) and that he would find his huge iron deposit in the south wall. After drilling 1,250 feet, his drill became permanently stuck. By 1929 he was broke and gave up his long 26 year quest. He died later that year. Sad story, huh? Yes, it is and he wouldn't have found it anyway because most of it vaporized on impact.

### **The Silver Lining.**

Barringer had persevered on his mining claims for such a long period that the land became legally his. The family owns it to this day and has developed it into a serious money making tourist attraction. A bit ironic. Twenty-six years of hardship and disappointment trying to find the motherlode of valuable iron ore only to have his family become rich with the motherlode of tourism.

### **The End of the Five Month Journey.**

Arizona's Meteor Crater was pretty much the last interesting stop in our five month journey of the Southwest. From the crater, we headed for Redding with a few uninteresting nights in truck stops and Indian Casinos. Our final stop before Redding was at the motorcycle riding area of **Stoneyford** and a visit with our friend, **Bill**. However, we have already written about Stoneyford so this issue concludes the Southwest tour.

### **A Personal Thought from Chuck.**

In 1972, I flew to Munich, Germany, with my wonderful friend **Bob Ehret** (now deceased.) We purchased two new BMW motorcycles and went on a tour through seven countries. The tour was arranged and facilitated by a young lady, **Jan** (now deceased) and her mother, **Dena**. I had the pleasure of taking Dena on several rides, the last one in Holland. Our RV friends from Holland, **Michiel, Anne-Mieke, and Suzanne**, just left Redding and headed off for Alaska. Somehow, it seems that my life has gone full circle. The combination of my third BMW motorcycle and the departure of our friends from Holland drives me to remember Dena. The new motorcycle is named after Bonnie and Bonnie also knows Dena. Okay, so what I need here for completion is to have Dena come up from Newport Beach and go for a ride on the new bike. **Dena, this is a serious invitation!**

Until next time, home is where you park it.

Chuck & Donna  
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