



Hopeful for Change

Allô! Je m'appelle Robert-Georges. Je vis actuellement en Colorado en l'États-Unis. J'ai habiter en Texas pour onze ans: deux mil un à deux mil douze. Je parle anglais, et j'écrire en anglais aussi. Je parle en français quelquefois. J'écrire en français rarement. Je travail au magasin pour chevaux. Aussi, je suis un graphiste (artiste graphique). Merci.



RG de Stolfe

June 4th marked one year that I have been in Colorado Springs. Also, I have not been back to Lubbock since July last year, the longest I've been away from Lubbock or Texas for that matter. June also marked six months since I started doing work for the company Equi-Line in Falcon, Colorado.

The above passage is in French and is a vague tribute to Bastille Day, which is July 14. In France, they call it La Fête Nationale, or The National Celebration, or

generally known as Le Quatorze Juillet, The Fourteenth of July. The French stormed into the Bastille Fortress (then, a prison) in 1789, just over a decade after the United States declaration of independence from England. This is a nearly identical holiday to the Fourth of July, or Independence Day, of the United States.

Unlike most of the past year, I am hopeful that July will be a more active and pleasant month of relief and happiness. Have a great day!



- 5** **Where you beēn, coffee bean?**
Who drinks the most coffee? Find out here!
- 6** **That's Alotta Smoke!**
Ever wonder why there're so many types of BBQ?
- 4** **Art The Public Can Appreciate**
Downtown Colorado Springs is rich in public art.
- 8** **That Law is Weird!**
Find out about some strange leftover laws in Texas.
- 5** **A Little Western History**
Borders changed a lot over time. Here's one example.
- 7** **Haáhe! Native Greetings**
Indian tribes have different ways to say "hello".
- 11** **Special Conversation**
You never know what's going on with these critters!

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Flames of Disaster

One year after the horrible fire in Waldo Canyon in June 2012 (and still relatively fresh on people's minds), the Colorado Springs area faced an even worse fire—ranked as the worst in Colorado history with the Waldo Canyon fire probably as second—a fire called the Black Forest Fire. I showed some of Black Forest with the Roller Coaster Road photos of the August 2012 issue. Black Forest is an area of heavy pine trees to the northeast of Colorado Springs proper at the northern part of the county. (If you look at Google maps, you can clearly see the edges of the forests.) *Read more on page 3.*

Texas Tech Rodeo

Four Lady Raiders and two Red Raiders went to Casper, Wyoming to compete in the 2013 College National Finals Rodeo. Unfortunately after three go rounds, none of the contestants made it to the short go. But that does not mean they didn't have a good time or even that they scored badly. I understand that the competition was fierce and very close with some events.

The new rodeo coach for Texas Tech Rodeo starts in July. I wish him well with the transfer of the reins as the previous rodeo coach also has a favorable opinion about him.

The Next Phase of The Ranch

After nine months, a new Director starts at the National Ranching Heritage Center in Lubbock, Texas. The previous Director and Associate Director retired after holding those positions since the late 1990s. The newly hired director worked previously for the Southwestern Exposition and Livestock Show in Fort Worth, Texas. With this new phase, we will see where the Ranch (as we generally call it) will go.

As most or many of you know, the National Ranching Heritage Center is where I worked from May 2006 to February 2010.

Summer Youth Classes

The Summer Youth Classes at the National Ranching Heritage Center is July 15-19, 2013. The classes are in the mornings in two shifts with a snack break in between. I am only teaching one class but will probably stay to help with another class. So, yes, I'll be in Lubbock in mid July.

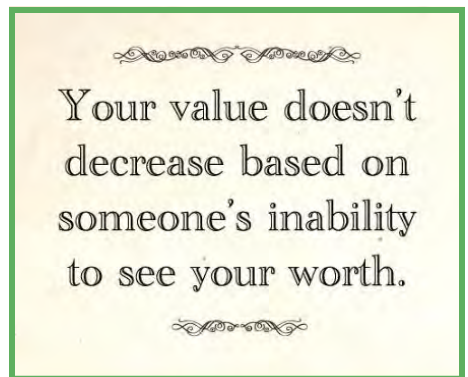
If anyone would like to contribute to my effort to be there, I certainly won't refuse the help or good will! :-)

National Day of the Cowboy

The 9th Annual National Day of the Cowboy is Saturday, July 27, 2013. United States Congress passed a resolution in 2005 to make the fourth Saturday in July this celebrated recognition. For more information, go to: www.nationaldayofthecowboy.com.

Cow Appreciation Day

This year's Cow Appreciation Day is on July 12, 2013. Now, Chick-fil-a has it's own celebration on this day! Since cows promote chicken there, if you come fully dressed as a cow on that day, you'll get a whole meal free! If you come partially looking like a cow, you'll get a free entrée. More than anything, they are looking for creativity and you get free food! www.chick-fil-a.com/Cows/Appreciation-Day



"What do YOU want?"

Identified! This flower shown in the October 2012 issue that I said was unknown is called Globe Amaranth (*gomphrena globosa*).



Flames of Disaster: Sucker Punched, Again!

One year after the horrible fire in Waldo Canyon in June 2012 (and still relatively fresh on people's minds), the Colorado Springs area faced an even worse fire—now ranked as the worst in Colorado history with the Waldo Canyon Fire probably as second—a fire called the Black Forest Fire. I showed some of Black Forest with the Roller Coaster Road photos of the August 2012 issue. Black Forest is an area of heavy pine trees to the northeast of Colorado Springs proper at the northern part of the county. (If you look at Google maps, you can clearly see the edges of the forests.)

The fire reportedly started around 1:00 PM on Tuesday, June 11, 2013 and quickly escalated to a heavily fueled fire from a great expanse of dry trees. As of the last statistics I heard, 14,198 acres burned, 480 houses burned completely flat, with 17 houses partially damaged. Efforts to control the fire so far totaled 3.5 million, and that number is not a damage estimate! Sadly, two people died in a too late attempt to load up and evacuate from a heavily wooded area where the fire caught up to them first. If there is any good news (which is not really good to those are completely devastated and numb! >:-[), a total of 3338 houses were untouched and part of the trees in the forest still remain.

Just to be clear, if not obvious, we were never in any danger.

This fire was the largest of several fires to hit the region within a few days! The other main fire was in the Royal Gorge area west of Cañon City. Though much smaller, the Royal Gorge Park and specifically the area really close to the Royal Gorge Bridge took a direct hit. The bridge is fine, less some minor damage, but the tourist attraction area was heavily damaged. 3218 acres burned.

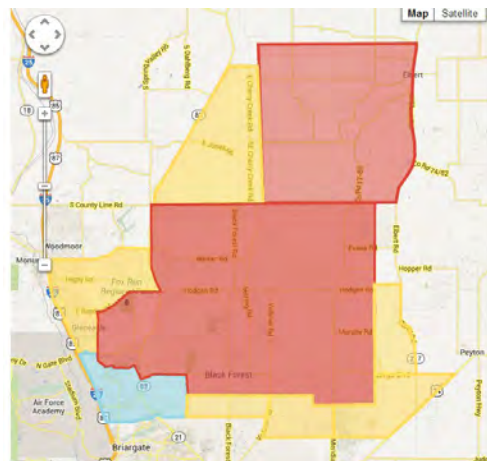
Many other fires of different sizes and levels of threat occurred throughout the state of Colorado within a relatively short time span. Some are fully contained, some are extinguished, while others still burn or smolder.



I took this photo about 7:00 PM on Tuesday, June 11, 2013 looking about northeast not too far from where I am staying.

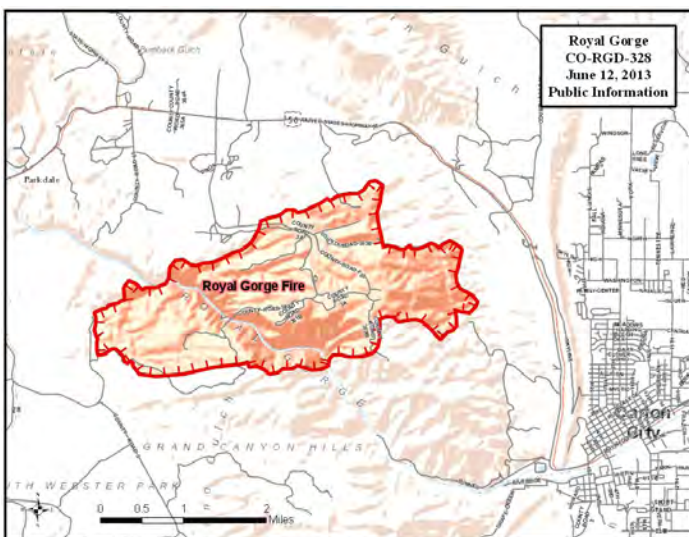
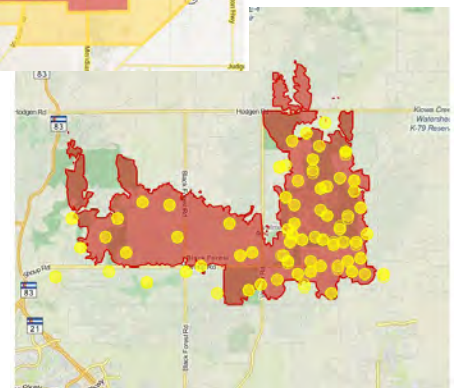


I took this photo about 5:00 PM on June 12, 2013 looking northwest off of Woodmen Road a few miles from Falcon.



This map shows the evacuation zones as of 5:30 PM, 6.13.13. Red is mandatory, yellow is pre-evacuation, and blue is voluntary evacuation.

The red outline of this map shows the burned area with the yellow dots referring to active fires as caught by satellite as of 4:00 PM, 6.13.13.



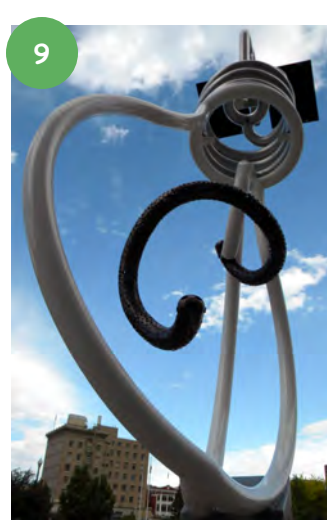
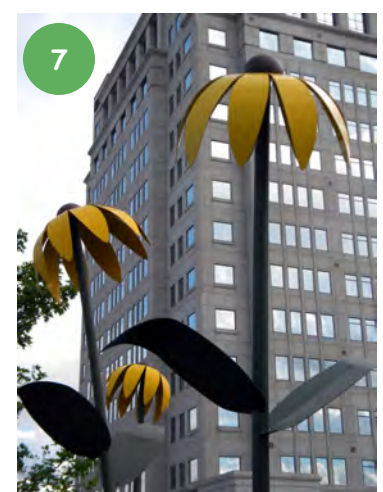
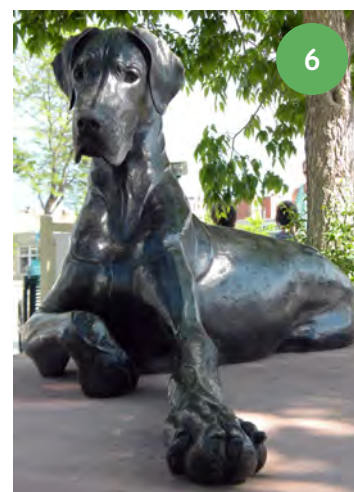
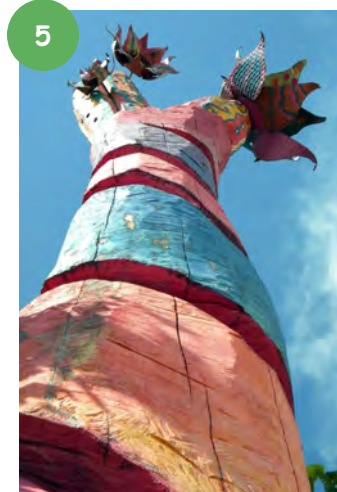
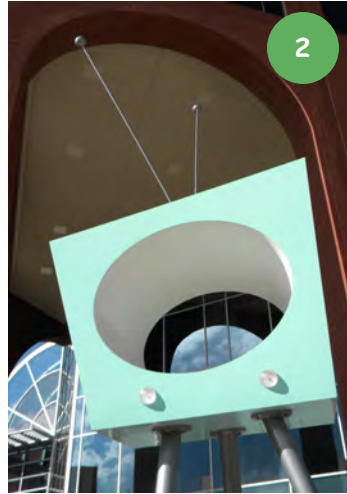
This map posted on <http://www.ksaa.com>

These two maps by Google found on <http://gazette.com>

Public Art of Colorado Springs

On June 6, 2013, we took a trip to downtown Colorado Springs to look at public art. With no less than 67 individual pieces, public art of some media or another (mostly sculptures) greatly enriches downtown Colorado Springs! Here are just a few of the works there.

- 1 (Title and artist unknown)
- 2 *Portal 1 & Portal 2* Chris Weed
- 3 *The Range Riders* Rusty Phelps
- 4 *Bison (Americanus)* Richard Jagoda
- 5 *Cubicle Cactus* Bob & Kat Tudor
- 6 *Bella and the Bug* Louise Peterson
- 7 *Sunflowers* Chris Weed
- 8 *Hank (the cowboy)* Rusty Phelps
- 9 *Watts New* Dale Pittock
- 10 *Lighted Lantern* James Nathan Muir
- 11 *The Pumpkin Man* Fred Darpino

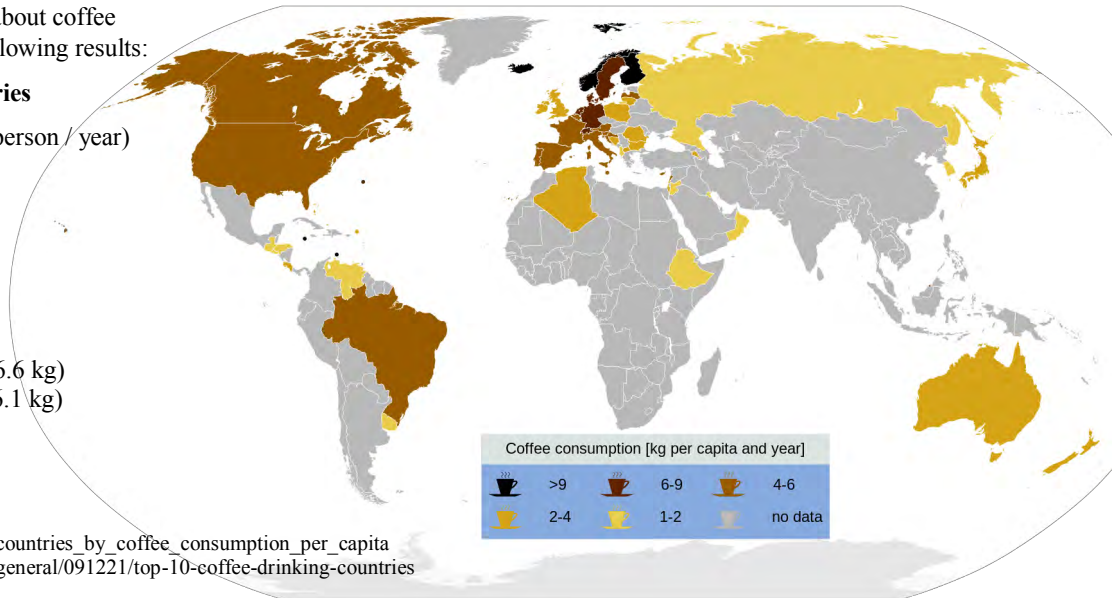


Global Coffee: Production and Consumption

Just for fun, I wanted to know about coffee drinkers. This list shows the following results:

Top 10 coffee drinking countries

1. Finland (11.8 kilograms / person / year)
2. Norway (9.6 kg)
3. Denmark (9 kg)
4. Iceland (9 kg)
5. Switzerland (8.2 kg)
6. Sweden (7.8 kg)
7. Aruba (6.8 kg)
8. Netherlands (6.7 kg)
9. Belgium & Luxembourg (6.6 kg)
10. Bosnia and Herzegovina (6.1 kg)



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_coffee_consumption_per_capita
<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/general/091221/top-10-coffee-drinking-countries>

A Little Bit of Western History

Something in Western History confused me. The issue was about the Louisiana Purchase and the Texas Annex. After a brief search with every trusty Google, I found a map that clearly answered that

question. Looking at the map, just as I suspected, the two lands did indeed overlap! The United States purchased Louisiana from France in 1803. In what appears as cleanup efforts of the borders,

the United States did land swapping. With Spain specifically, two sections of land went to Spain with two others to the US. This then formed the northeastern borders of the Texas Annex. All clear!



<http://storiesofusa.com/american-expansion-marbury-madison-thomas-jefferson-louisiana-purchase-lewis-clark-journey-war-1812-missouri-compromise-monroe-doctrine-indian-removal-act-battle-alamo-mexican-american-war-1803-1853/>

Floating around on Facebook.

What About BBQ?

I wanted to know more about regional variations of BBQ and the corresponding sauces. This is what I found out. I shall only attempt to give generalities, which may or may not agree with what you know about the style.

Texas Style

The main focus is brisket with a dry rub of chili powder and other seasonings cooked over oak or mesquite. The sauce is mostly tomato based and more on the hot side and somewhat thin.

Oklahoma Style

I recently discovered this style. Similar to Texas style, it focuses on meat cooked over oak with optional sauce, meaning not required. Sauce is tomato based and thick, not overly tangy nor overly sweet.

Kansas City Style

Focusing on pork and chicken mainly and beef too, this style features a sweet based dry rub with the meat smoked slow over hickory to avoid the sugar from charring. The sauce is thick and tomato based with mucho sweetness, and some with a good spicy kick.

Memphis Style

Somewhat similar to Kansas City Style, Memphis style cooks pork mostly with or without dry rub and much less sauce than other areas. Sauce is used lightly and mostly served at the table. The flavor is more tangy and not nearly as sweet, with the sauce being more thin and runny.

St. Louis Style

This BBQ is more directly grilled than smoked and heavily sauced. The sauce is typically sweet and tomato based with a specific tang. Favorite meats are pork, "crispy snoots", bratwurst, and salsiccia (Italian sausage).

Virginia Style

A cross of Carolina and Memphis styles, Virginia style is also pork based mostly (also Virginia ham and chicken) with a sauce of flavors of bourbon, vinegar, tomato, corn, and peppers.

Carolina Style

These pig fanatics like pork that is rubbed with spices and smoked. During cooking, a spiced vinegar sauce marinates the meat. Sauces are mainly added at the table and vary greatly within the region.

-*Eastern North Carolina*: Thin, runny vinegar and spice (Cayenne) based sauce.

-*Western North Carolina*: Similar to Eastern but with varying amounts of tomato sauce added. Also known as Lexington Sauce.

-*Western South Carolina*: A peppery tomato or ketchup based sauce.

-*Central South Carolina*: "Carolina Gold" sauce with ingredients of yellow mustard, brown sugar, vinegar, and spices. This sauce is the most yellowy of sauces.

-*South Carolina Coastal*: The sauce is a thin, watery, vinegary pepper sauce like Eastern NC.

Florida Style

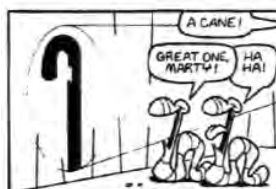
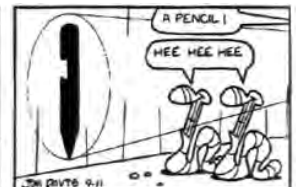
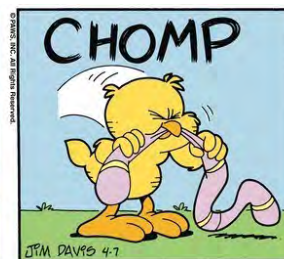
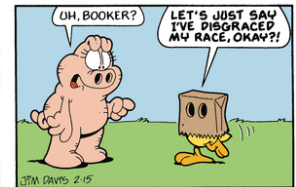
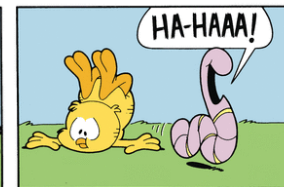
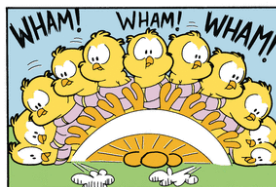
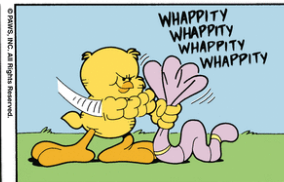
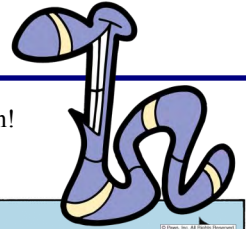
Having grown up in Florida, I remember some restaurants have a typical Southern based BBQ options with a sauce that was similar to the Carolina variations but with a twist of Key lime juice. (As I recall, quite unique and good.)

In another issue, I'll cover some of the lesser known styles of American BBQ.

U.S. Acres Worms

The worms are so comical that Jim Davis featured them often!

<http://www.gocomics.com/us-acres>



State City

Just for fun, I wanted to know how many states have self named cities. Here is what I found. Of the 50 states, I identified 23 of them to have a self named city. Here is the list I found (to the best of my knowledge).

Arizona City
 Arkansas City
 California City
 Colorado City
 Delaware City
 Florida City
 Idaho City
 Illinois City
 Iowa City
 Kansas City
 Maryland City
 Minnesota City
 Mississippi City
 Missouri City
 Montana City
 Nebraska City
 Jersey City (without the New)
 New York City
 Ohio City
 Oklahoma City
 Oregon City
 Tennessee City
 Texas City

Native Greetings

Museums are a great place for learning as well as a place for recreation. The Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum is a general museum having a wide variety of collections. In their regional history area, they have exhibits about the different Indians in Colorado. They had a sheet with Indian greetings. So, here are the various greetings of the tribes in Colorado.


Apache (Jicarilla) Dá nzhq *dahn-zhone*
 Arapajo Hebe *heh-beh*
 Cheyenne Haáhe *hah-heh*
 Comanche Maruawe *mah-ruh-ah-way*
 Kiowa Hacho *hah-cho*
 Navajo Yá'át'ééh *yah-aht-ay*
 Shoshone Behne *buh-nuh*
 Ute Maiku *my-kuh*

Family Archives Found

Here are some old newspaper clips of my grandfather. To catch you up to speed, he was born in 1900 and later came to New York City from a town called Trieste, which at the time was part of Austria and since has been part of Italy. During his time in New York, he

was an opera singer. I understand that he also sang for the Metropolitan Opera at various times. Later, he moved to Florida and lived in various places in Florida and had different businesses. Unfortunately, I do not know the newspaper(s) or the dates of the articles.

Soloist



AUSTIN DE STOLFE

Well known tenor of this city, who will have one of the solo parts in the Lenten cantata, "The Seven Last Words of Christ," which the Knights

Soloist
 [photo]
 Austin de Stolfe

Well known tenor of this city, who will have one of the solo parts in the Lenten cantata, "The Seven Last Words of Christ," which the Knights
 ... (rest of clip unknown.)

DE STOLFE SINGS FOR BOYS' CLUB

300 Members Hear Program at Feeney Park Quarters

Austin De Stolfe, popular tenor and radio star, entertained more than 300 members of the New Rochelle Boys' Club with a musical program at Feeney Park last night.

Mr. De Stolfe, who was introduced to the assembled members by Morton S. Fuerst, president, sang three songs, "Ride on Vaquera," "La Spaniola" and "Just a Memory." His second song, "La Spaniola," was received with such vociferous acclamation by the boys he was induced to repeat the song. Mr. De Stolfe was accompanied on the piano by Annunciata Calafati, a New Rochelle High School student.

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Weird Texas Laws

The department shall develop and administer a program awarding matching grants to political subdivisions of this state for weather modification and control.

A recently passed anticrime law requires criminals to give their victims 24 hours notice, either orally [verbally] or in writing, and to explain the nature of the crime to be committed.

The entire Encyclopedia Britannica is banned in Texas because it contains a formula for making beer at home.

When two trains meet each other at a railroad crossing, each shall come to a full stop, and neither shall proceed until the other has gone.

It is illegal to take more than three sips of beer at a time while standing.

It is illegal for one to shoot a buffalo from the second story of a hotel.

Abilene: It is illegal to idle or loiter anyplace within the corporate limits of the city for the purpose of flirting or mashing.

Austin: Wire cutters can not be carried in your pocket.

Clarendon: It is illegal to dust any public building with a feather duster.

El Paso: Churches, hotels, halls of assembly, stores, markets, banking rooms, railroad depots, and saloons are required to provide spittoons "of a kind and number to efficiently contain excretations into them.

Galveston: No person shall operate a bicycle at a speed greater than is reasonable and prudent under the conditions then existing.

Mesquite: It is illegal for children to have unusual haircuts.

Port Arthur: Obnoxious odors may not be emitted while in an elevator.

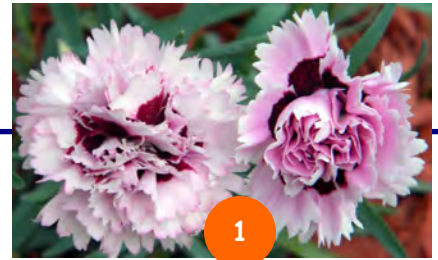
Temple: No one may ride a horse and buggy through the town square.
Cattle thieves may be hanged on the spot.
You can ride your horse in the saloon.

Texarkana: Owners of horses may not ride them at night without tail lights.

Flowers of 2013

This year, I bought a bunch of 4-pack starters to plant in my new planting areas. After some time, they started growing and making some nice flowers. Here are a few of them.

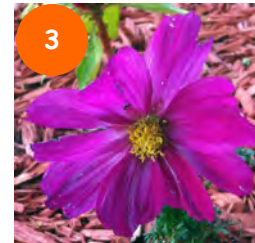
1. Dianthus (Early Bird Fizzy)
2. Petunia
3. Cosmos
4. Portulaca (Sundial Gold)
5. Pansy (various)
6. Gaillardia (Blanket Flower)
7. Gazania
8. Scabiosa (Pincushion Ritz Rose)
9. Celosia
10. Lobelia



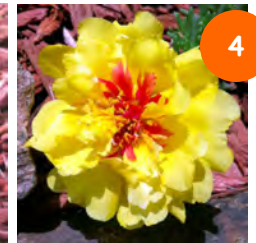
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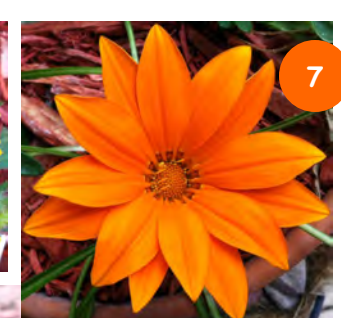
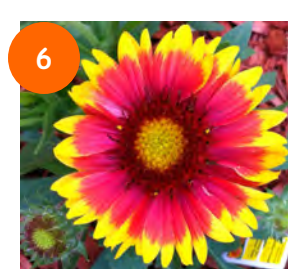
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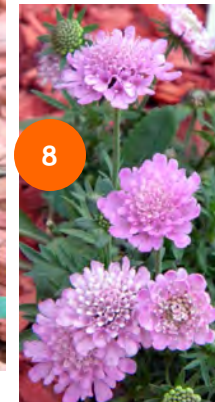
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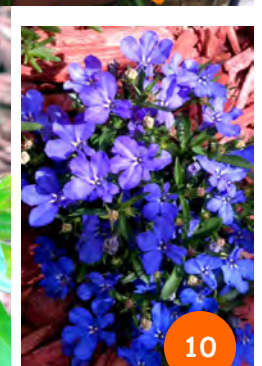
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8



9



10

Photos of the Month



This year's Russian Sage with bees yet again buzzing all over it!



Panda likes her melon! At this point, she had quite enough!



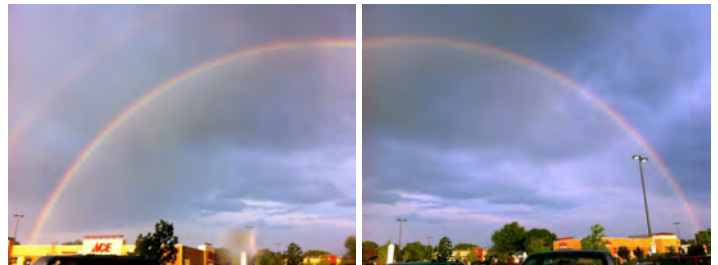
Gotta like ladybugs!

Squirrel Report

I have never seen this before! This squirrel is actually gnawing on a dead bird!



↓ *Double the fun!*



A double rainbow just after a brief, heavy shower on June 13, 2013



Don't you like the texture of sanded stainless steel?

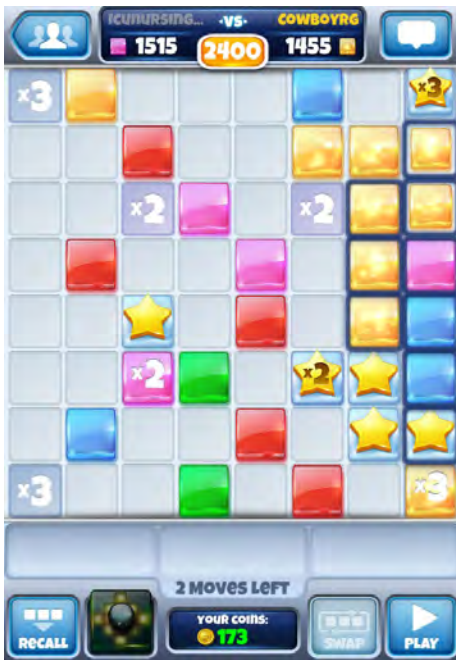
Best Play Yet!

I did not expect this point value! I knew it would be high, but this is double what I thought I had! Let's review.

Yellow: 13 squares x 5 points/square x 3 x 2 x 3 x 2 (color bonus) = 2340

Blue: 6 squares x 5 points/square x 2 = 60

Grand total: 2400 points!



Barn Manners, Even Rules

If you ride it, feed it
If it drinks water, give it some
If you unlock it, lock it back up
If you open it, close it
If you borrow it, return it
If you lose it, replace it
If you smoke, DON'T
If you leave a mess, clean it up
If you turn it on, turn it off
If you break it, fix it
If you move it, put it back
If you throw it down, pick it up
If you fall off, get back on

Super Moon 2013



The 2013 super moon, technically called a perigee, as seen midnight, June 23, 2013.

A happy heart is good medicine and a cheerful mind works healing... (Proverbs 17:22)

Summer Truths

The best parking spot is determined by shade not distance.

No one would dream of not having air conditioning.

Hot water comes out of both faucets.

You realize that the asphalt has a liquid state.

You can make instant sun tea.

The potatoes cook underground and all you have to do to have lunch is to pull one out and add butter, salt, and pepper.

If the temperature drops below 95, you feel a bit chilly.

Farmers are feeding their chickens crushed ice to keep them from laying hardboiled eggs.

You only need two fingers to drive your car in July.

Cows are giving evaporated milk.

You get a sunburn through your car window.

The trees are whistlin' for the dogs.

You burn your hand opening the car door.

A sad Texan once prayed:

You break a sweat the instant you step outside between dawn and work time.

"I wish it would rain—not so much for me, cuz I've seen it, but for my 7-year-old."

Two west country yokels were on the train heading homewards through Somerset, England when one of them took notice of some cows.

"Herd of cows."

"What a lovely bunch of cows." he said.

"Of course I've heard of cows."

"Not a bunch, herd." his mate replied.

"No, a cow herd."

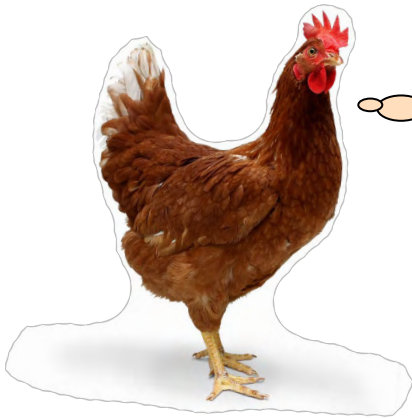
"Heard of what?"

"What do I care what a cow heard. I have no secrets to keep from a cow."

A Typical Conversation on the Family Farm

What's going on, guys?

Did you hear about Farmer Dan?

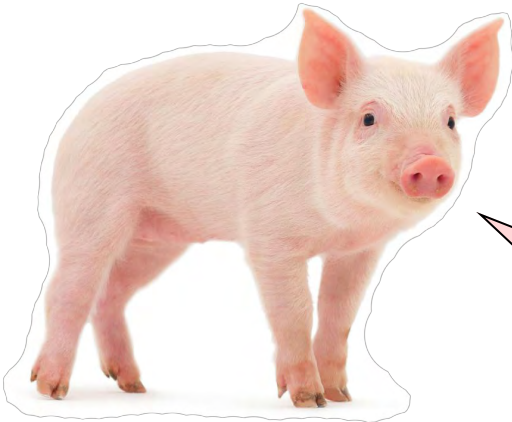


Yeah! He flew the coo-coo's nest!



Hold it!
He just milked one too many times!

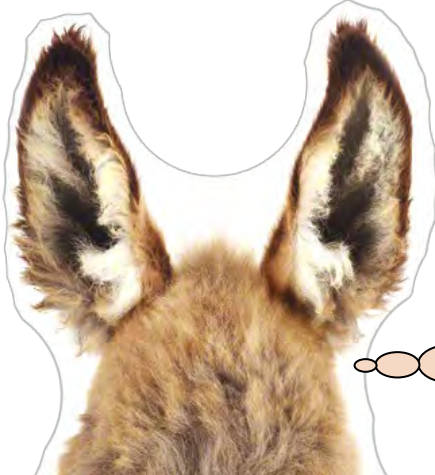
That's not what I heard!



Yeah, he ate too much bacon and the fat went to his head!



You guys are stupid!
He just needed a vacation away from the farm!



I want a carrot.
No, wait! A sugar cube!



Images obtained from various sources online.

Back Page Literature Double—Train Traveling To Arizona

I had a great time writing and making a booklet about my 1994 bus trip to Arizona that I made another booklet the next year about my 1995 train trip to Arizona. I definitely had more fun taking the train than I ever did taking the bus! I also took the train for a third trip to Arizona in 1996 as well as took the train one way to Arizona a few weeks later when I moved to Flagstaff in 1996. Enjoy!

Train Travelling To Arizona

During the summer of 1995, I planned to go on a second trip to Flagstaff, Arizona. Nancy, Barbara, Donna Marie, Greg, and I, along with Ron, our professor, made pottery in Jacksonville for three weeks to fire in the Naborigama kiln located at the Mountain Campus of Northern Arizona University where we spent another three weeks. Since the bus I took last year was not very convenient or comfortable, I decided instead to take the train. I left Jacksonville on Tuesday, July 11, 1995 at 9:30 PM EST to start the second half of my Arizona trip. From this point on, taking the train to Flagstaff was my favorite part of my Arizona trip because of the many different landscapes I saw and the unusual events that occurred while I was on the train.

Starting Out

The Amtrak Superliner I was on was different from other Amtrak trains I had ridden in that the cars had two levels. Entrance doors, bathrooms, and storage areas were on the first level while the seats were on the second level; a set of narrow stairs connected the two. After about twenty minutes of confusion with the coach attendant, I finally got my correct seat. I sat behind four traditional Amish people who were going to El Paso. During the night, I tried to sleep, but occasionally awoke to notice thick fog and a full moon. By the early morning, a round, orange sun peeked through the trees and leftover fog. While later in the morning, we crossed over a bridge where hundreds of huge dragonflies flew by. Around noon, we arrived in the New Orleans station, which happened to be the same station where my bus stopped at last year.

New Orleans Rendez-Vous

Since we had two hours before the train was to leave again, I tried to explore what I could of downtown New Orleans. From the station, I walked down Howard Avenue to Lee Circle where I decided to catch a cable car. The clacky Saint Charles street car pushed its way down the street vibrating and making loud scraping noises. Occasionally, the conductor tapped a bell while customers also signaled their stops. I got off on Canal Street where I walked around exploring the many shops and back alleys. Because New Orleans was very hot and humid, I was really glad to get back to the air conditioning of the train. At least I was able to see more of New Orleans this year than I was able to see from the bus last year!

Contrasting Terrains

During the afternoon while riding through Louisiana, forest ranger volunteers broadcasted facts about the La Fitte Swamp, such as the effects of settling on the animals living in this region of the Mississippi River Delta. As we traveled through East Texas, the landscape turned to vast, flat land with trees found only in large clumps. The next day as the train clacked down the tracks through Southwest Texas, the landscape was flat with low scrub. Prickly Pear cactus later appeared when we crossed over the Amistad Dam. The Rio Grande, where this dam was located, was blue green in color and was thirty-five feet below its normal level. In the mid morning when we crossed the highest bridge in Texas, we saw another river below that wound through a beautiful water carved canyon. As we rode along around 11:00 AM, the train stuttered to a stop. After a few minutes, we moved again with the conductor announcing, "Sorry about that; there was some wildlife on the tracks." I think the wildlife were cows since herds were nearby. The hilly landscape was covered with many kinds of cactus, lots of yuccas, colorful rocks, and scrub grass. In the early afternoon as we traveled by someone's sheep ranch, at least ten dust devils roamed around on the property. I liked noting how the landscape changed from Bayou swamps to flat scrubby plains to rolling hills full of desert vegetation.

Wrapping Up

As we neared Phoenix, my ride to Arizona was close to the end. We arrived in the mid afternoon in El Paso, which is where the Amish people got off and were going to Albuquerque. Just beyond the El Paso station near the Mexican border, we passed by a location nicknamed "Shanty Town" where Mexican people lived in wood and cardboard huts. Shortly thereafter, we again crossed the Rio Grande into New Mexico. At this point, the train was two hours behind schedule, and I had seven more stops until I was to arrive in Phoenix. By late evening, we passed Benson, Arizona, a station that is nothing more than a large bus bench, and Tucson, Arizona when I heard about a train derailment somewhere between Phoenix and Los Angeles. Once we arrived in Phoenix around midnight, the station became hectic because of the other passengers trying to get on the right buses. The baggage people, arriving thirty minutes later, pulled the bags off the cart and threw them on the ground. I hoped that my pottery was not broken! I was glad to finally be able to sleep by 2:00 AM once I got to the Holiday Inn.

Flagstaff Events

On Friday around noon, I checked out of my room. I then for the day until around 4:00 PM went to the Heard Museum. After going to this great museum, I later went to the airport where I waited for Ron and his fiancée, Lynn. Once we finally found each other, we loaded the car with our bags and drove up to Flagstaff. Generally for over two weeks while in Flagstaff, I helped to fire the Naborigama kiln (I had no broken pottery), visited a few local sites, and walked a lot through old downtown as well as around campus. Unfortunately this year, I was not able to visit any attractions because of the lack of transportation. On Tuesday, August 1, 1995, I caught the 12:40 PM Nava-Hopi bus to Phoenix.

Nava-Hopi Ride

Although I originally did not plan to take this bus, the ride to Phoenix was very scenic. From pine trees and rocks, the land started breaking into the terrain of Oak Creek Canyon with Sedona in the background. Then after dropping quite an

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elevation, the scenery changed to just scrub and piñon trees. Piles of tumbleweeds rested in the valleys between the many hills of this area. With the rest of the ride down, the scenery was more scrub with many kinds of cactus growing including Saguaro, prickly pear, and a few barrel. Once I arrived in Phoenix, which was around 115 degrees, I again stayed the night at the Holiday Inn. To my surprise while watching TV, I heard that Hurricane Erin landed around Vero Beach then was expected to hit the Mississippi-Alabama area. I hoped that this would not cause me to stay overnight because, by this point on my trip, I had no money left. On Wednesday, August 2, 1995, I got to the train station to catch the 8:00 AM train. When I checked in my three bags, one of them was unfortunately over the weight limit of fifty pounds. Therefore, my last ten dollars I had disappeared for an overweight fee. I was about to spend three days and two nights on the train with no money and only the snacks I had with me [which was not much].

Headin' Back

The train ride home was similar to coming out but with a few unplanned events. In East Arizona, we passed a lot of corn and cotton fields that I was really surprised to see since this was the semidesert. Once we got to El Paso, Texas, more Amish people who were different from the ones coming out boarded the train. Because I did not have any real food, the people who sat in the seats next to me were really generous to give me some of their leftover chicken. While in Southwest Texas, I noticed that in order to keep the tracks level through the hilly terrain, the hills were cut into as well as the valleys built up to provide a level

surface. I saw this method used all through the Southwest states. Around 7:00 PM, we made an unscheduled stop in Fort Hancock, Texas, a blink-and-you-miss-it, one-stop-light town. As I understood it, someone from the dining car got sick and needed medical help, which caused the train to stay in Fort Hancock for about forty-five minutes. To say the least, we became about an hour more behind.

Continuing On

In the morning after leaving San Antonio, the conductor announced that Hurricane Erin was hitting the Florida panhandle near Alabama and that the train probably would not get past New Orleans, in which case we would then finish traveling by bus to Jacksonville. On the way to New Iberia, Louisiana, in the evening, I saw many sugar cane fields, the Bayou swamps, and above-ground tombs in the many graveyards. Once we got to the New Orleans station around 10:30 PM, we waited until about 1:00 PM before leaving on a bus to Jacksonville.

Bussing Home

Although taking the bus was cramped, the crew was very considerate and even gave us soda and muffins to start out with as well as said that they would pay for our breakfast. On my particular bus, many foreign students including German, French, and Japanese were traveling. In the morning, we stopped at Shoney's for breakfast. Then later, we arrived in the Jacksonville station around 11:45 AM, which was actually two hours earlier than if we arrived by train. Because my bags were not on my bus, I came back to the station several hours later after the other busses arrived. Two of my bags arrived;

unfortunately my third bag, which happened to be the overweight one, never did arrive. In the months following the trip, I did eventually get some compensation from Amtrak. I still hope though to one day get my third bag back.

Remembering My Trip

My train trip to and from Arizona was a great way for me to travel because of the many types of scenery I saw and the experience of the many quirks that occurred. From the fog during the night to the giant dragonflies on the bridge, my ride to New Orleans was one of adjustment. The ride on the old clacky streetcar was great despite the high humidity as well as seeing the wonders of La Fitte Swamp. As the land changed from bayous to flatland to semidesert, I liked seeing how each scene was different. The cow on the tracks was classic since I am sure that this event was rare. From Shanty Town to the Benson bus stop, I was glad to finally get to Phoenix then Flagstaff where I spent over two weeks to basically fire my pottery in the Naborigama kiln. Though unexpected to take the bus back to Phoenix, I really liked the peaceful ride through the canyons then the desert. Despite not having any real food or money while on the train home, I still enjoyed the ride. Hurricane Erin may have stopped the train from continuing to Jacksonville, but not the passengers from continuing on busses. Despite running late on the train, my bus arrived in the Jacksonville station a couple hours ahead of schedule. Although one of my bags remained missing, that did not stop me from having good memories of my trip. All in all, I am glad I took the train, and I look forward to taking the train again when I go back to Flagstaff for a third visit!



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C U L&R
Alligator!

After while
Crocodile!

