

## Governing Board

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chinookcamping@icloud.com

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*Thank you to the Webmaster for  
both CRVC and CCC,*

**Dave Shehane,**

*for his time and talent in  
posting our Trailblazer*

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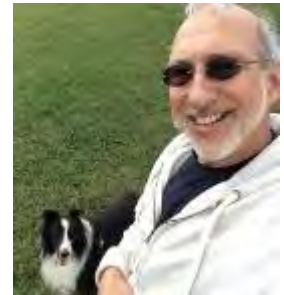
December 2014 Issue 14-4

## President's Message

What an excellent season of camping it has been! One last time I want to thank all the club members who helped make the Williamsburg rally and annual meeting such a success. This club works so smoothly that there's always a danger of losing sight of the magic of who makes it that way. So rally hosts Klaus and Nita Wilkinson, co-hosts Russ and Eileen Disbrow, and ALL the rest: kitchen crew, clean-up crew, everyone who pitched in to make it a great RV experience...thank you, thank you, thank you. You make it look so easy!

Cooler weather is setting in, and I'm seeing where a lot of you are winterizing. I always resist that myself. If there are no winter trips planned I usually give in around December. Until then I just like to think we can get up and go on short notice if we get a couple of those nice, mild days. And if the weather turns mean, like it did with Super Storm Sandy, and we need a self-contained cabin with power and heat for a few days, there's our Chinook all ready for us! No, we'll stay plugged in, heat set to keep things from freezing. We'll be talking off for Florida and our next rally in January anyway: is it really worth winterizing for just a month or so?

Mark McCluski



## Winter Rally, Ocala Sun Resort, Ocala, Florida



**January 11-14, 2015**

**Watch your email updates for the details of the winter rally in Ocala. Cutoff date for reservations is December 12! Ocala Sun RV resort, 2559 SW Hwy 484, Ocala FL 34473. 352-307-1100. Hosted by Fred Cummings.**

### Chinook Camping Club winter rally (January) -

Check in on Sunday 11th, exit Wednesday morning at check out (unless members have made reservations to come early or stay later based on availability)

Sunday night - meet & greet: 6pm - 9pm

Monday morning - 7:30am - 9am - breakfast

Monday night - 5:30pm - 8pm - pot luck

Tuesday morning - 7:30am - 9:30am breakfast

**TRAVELOGUE:** This month, we present the first part of a travelogue by member Cyndy Gabrys, who took about a 6 month trip across the country, accompanied by her elderly dog Tipper. She agreed to write up her travels for us to enjoy. Because of the size of the files, I have split this section into two parts, and will be sending the second part along with one of the weekly updates. Thanks Cyndy for sharing!

## From the October Williamsburg Rally and Annual Meeting

It's probably a cliché to say "a good time was had by all" but the Williamsburg rally was a rousing success. We had roomy level spaces near each other, and only a short walk to the social hall. There is a fenced dog park, and the facility itself is only a short drive from the historic sites of Williamsburg.



Sunday evening we gathered for the meet and greet, sustained as usual by a collection of wonderful finger foods to share. If there is one thing Chinookers do well, it's bringing food to eat! Hosts Nita and Klaus Wilkinson along with co-hosts Eileen and Russ Disbrow led volunteers in decorating for Oktoberfest, with colorful tablecloths, centerpieces and wall décor. It set the stage for a fun fall party.



At the annual meeting Sunday evening, the current board was re-elected unanimously. The consensus was they are doing a good job, and why mess with what's working? The meeting minutes will reflect brief discussion on changing the length of terms, but no decisions to change the by-laws were made.

Discussions will continue, so keep an eye out for future information. We reviewed finances, determined that the funds for rallies could be increased. After the meeting, we all gathered together for the group photo. Check it out on the photo page.



Monday morning breakfast was a delicious selection of sausage and pancakes, fruits, jellies and other goodies. After breakfast, Gayle Wrobel introduced us to the new membership directory app, and we all exchanged electronic device tech tips. It's always helpful to have friends show you how to download the app and get started. We had free time to explore the area, so many drove into Williamsburg to walk through the historical sites and tour the area. Others hung around the campground visiting, playing goofy golf or checking out improvements during an informal open house.

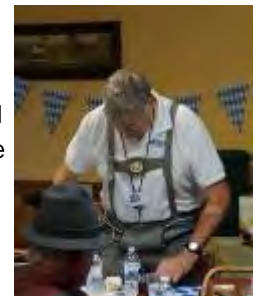


Nita and Klaus went all out on the food for the catered dinner buffet. Along with a cash donation selection of German beer and various wines, we enjoyed potatoes, red cabbage, sauerkraut and salads. Klaus and helpers served grilled brats and beef roulade. With enthusiastic



attendees decked out in dirndls and lederhosen, beer steins large, small, plain and fancy were filled and emptied. German music set the atmosphere, and as usual we ate too much! And what a collection of steins for the stein contest! We had every type of stein, from ones that held a couple of litres to the teeny tiny treasure from an estate sale.

Tuesday morning we again had breakfast together in the social hall, with pancakes and other tasty treats. We had received the news that Tom Jackson had suddenly taken ill on the way to the rally. (We checked in with Tom recently and he's recovered and working again, and will definitely be at the January rally). The scheduled tech tip session with Tom became an informal sharing of question and answers, with electronic expertise from Bobb Partridge and schematic manuals shared by Bill Fischer. Members shared experiences and questions about tires, radios, batteries and more. Later in the afternoon before dinner, we had a pet parade, with costume and without. Our club has a lot of pets, both dogs and cats. The Arnolds and Skip Braden and Anne Brown introduced new puppies, the Breedings and Cyndy Gabrys introduced new dog adoptions.



Dinner was a collection of leftovers from the wonderful German dinner, and after cleaning up the clubhouse, a few of our musical members held a dulcimer, guitar and violin session. Wednesday morning we gathered at one of the larger sites for coffee and snacks before leaving, and shared information on the post-rally destinations: east, west, north or south??

If you haven't ever come to a rally, or if it's been a while, check out the schedule listed in the newsletter, and make plans to come. They are typically



informal with lots of time to meet new friends, visit with old friends, learn from each other, fix things that are broken, find new destinations for Chinooking, and see what additions, subtractions or upgrades others have made to their coaches. As well as lots of time to just chill and enjoy being out in the RV! We are a valuable resource to each other, from newbie to experienced to expert, even if it's to find three different solutions to any given problem. So plan a trip around spending a few days with other Chinookers relaxing, eating and visiting!



#### **EXCERPTS FROM THE ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES (complete minutes were included in the weekly update) TREASURER'S REPORT, Linda Stamper**

Linda presented the 2014 Annual Financial Report to members in attendance. Current balance is \$10,308.21. She noted that since this is the first year's reporting after the change in FY (FY is now October 1 to October 1), the report reflects an 11 month year, so expenditures are not for a full year. Members were reminded that the reason for the FY change was to eliminate the preparation of extra financial reports that do not coincide with the annual meeting.

Linda further outlined the proposed budget for 2015, based on previous budgets, which includes \$250. for three "mini rallies," and \$1,500. for the annual rally. She noted that expenses continue to go up for Club-provided items, such as name tags and magnetic signs. Copies of the report are available upon request.

A motion to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented was made by Sue DeMartini, seconded by Bill Christopherson, and carried unanimously.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

##### **Proposed Rally Budget Revision**

Mark indicated that the treasury appears to have funds enough to consider some type of ongoing additional expenses to benefit the club, such as increasing the amount allocated for the annual rally. Any suggestions should be presented to the Board.

##### **Staggering election years of officers & Changing terms from one year to two**

Many clubs stagger the terms of officers so that the entire Board does not turn over each year. The Western Club has done this for years. An advantage is that new officers have experienced Board members to consult with, thus reducing the "learning curve." Eileen said that another suggestion might be to change the title from "Vice President of xxxx" to "Director of xxxx." However, the issue seems to be more a lack of volunteers. It was moved and seconded to table this item for further Board discussion, with recommendations to be presented to the group at a later date.

##### **Providing printed copies of Bylaws only to new members**

This is the current practice, and is on the agenda for information only. Existing members may always request a copy if needed.

##### **New Chinook Production**

Rich Poole announced that he had traveled to Junction City, OR this summer, and visited the Country Coach factory where the new Chinook prototype was produced. Upon talking to the staff there, it appears there is no contract at this time to build more Chinooks at Country Coach, nor is there a contract in place elsewhere to their knowledge.



# Just for Fun

## This month a few notes from the editor:

Apologies for getting the newsletter out a little late! I'm preparing for Christmas at the same time I am closing out my job to prepare for retirement on January 1, 2015. Amazing how many files and computer folders you can accumulate in 16+ years. As well as preparing for someone else to take over your work tasks!

**Newsletter:** With this edition, I will be splitting the pages into two pdf files, because we have an outstanding travel report from member Cyndy Gabrys, who in about six months recently traveled the US from stem to stern. Make sure you open both files!

**Door Signs and Cards:** Typically when you join the club, Eileen will fabricate a laminated Chinook Camping sign for your rig's door so other rally attendees can identify who belongs to each coach. They are great for the rallies, but mine got lost when I forgot it and drove off. So I took the lead from some who have ordered signs from Vistaprint.com. They are fully magnetized and you can pretty much design your own. And reasonably priced too!



Also at Vistaprint, you can order business cards dirt cheap. And although many of us are happily not in the business world anymore, printing personal cards to hand out or leave behind with someone can be handy. There are numerous offers for special deals at Vistaprint and other like online printers, so check it out and get creative!

**Fun reading:** I am also easy prey for online and print publications. I get the daily or weekly emails from RV.net and rvtravel.com. I recently picked up the Gypsy Journal at one campground and found it highly entertaining! Check it out at <http://gypsyjournalrv.com/> They have an online presence and a print publication.

**Ideas:** In future newsletters, I would like to feature a quick **summary of a campground or way station** recently visited by members. If you have an average, outstanding or outstandingly bad experience at a campground or stop-over, send me an email. I'm thinking we'd like to know about access into the facility, cost of staying, cleanliness of the facilities and area, how level the spots are, how shaded or sunny, and other info typically included in reviews. We can read lots of reviews online, but it would be great if members gave us the benefit of their more recent experiences! Email me at [cnbreeding52@gmail.com](mailto:cnbreeding52@gmail.com)

## IT'S FUN TO CONTRIBUTE AS AN OFFICER!

Hello Everyone, it's not too soon to start thinking how you can serve our club. Please consider running for an office: positions include President, VP Rally, VP Membership, Treasurer and Secretary/sunshine. The jobs are not difficult and past officers will be willing to train their replacements. If you are interested in any positions, please email me at [dscremens@gmail.com](mailto:dscremens@gmail.com) or call my cell, 815-985-4612. Thank you!!

Diane Cremens, Chair, Nominating Committee

Do you know a member who is ill or recovering that needs some SUNSHINE?

**Send the info to Diane Poole at**  
[poolead72@gmail.com](mailto:poolead72@gmail.com)



## TIPS, TRICKS AND THINGS WE LEARN THE HARD WAY

Tom Jackson missed the last rally due to a brief health issue, (he's all better now!) but wanted to remind everyone to replace the carbon monoxide detector if it's over five years old. This is particularly important with the cold weather travel if you are running the propane furnace and cooking inside. Everyone is heading down from the cold to the rally in Florida, right? You also need to change out the propane alarm, usually located near the floor by the sink. The Safe-T -Alert 30 series is what many of us have. They are readily available at Amazon and Camping World, easy to install (the CO monitor may require a tiny bit of trimming of the wall board in some rigs.) And they could save your life!



## VP of Membership Report 2014 by Gayle Wroble

Our club membership is currently at 109 members. Since the last newsletter, we have welcomed 10 new members! We have said good-bye to Pete & Marty Karczmarczyk and Dick & Mary Sands.

#369  
David and Joanne MacDowell  
Saranac Lake, NY

#370  
Bonnie Fitzgerald  
Rockport, TX  
2000 Concourse

#371  
J.J. Rayman  
Conroe, TX  
2004 Concourse



#372  
Wayne G. and Dottie L. Norris  
Underhill, VT  
2001 Concourse

#373  
David M. and Lynnette Baker  
Ottumwa, IA  
2000 Concourse

#374  
David (Dave) & Carole George  
541 Newbury Ct.  
Galloway, NJ  
2000 Concourse

#375  
Susan Hill/Anne Patten  
St. Augustine, FL  
1995 Premier

#376  
George P. & Phoebe G Papadi  
Gainesville, FL  
2002 Premier

#377  
Donald G. Harris  
South Easton, MA  
2001 Concourse



The EZ Membership Directory app for smartphones is working great. I also now have the online membership directory working. You just need a Google email account to access it. If you can't access it, and you want to, please send me your Google account email at: ChinookCampingClub@gmail.com, and I'll set up permission to use it. In a future email update, you will receive a link to a printable, PDF version of the Membership Directory, and the Bylaws & Code of Ethics book. Still working on printed books, and I should have them available by the January rally. You will be able to request one to be mailed, if you need to, or you can pick one up at the rally in January. Thank you for being patient while these changes are made. Also, don't forget that we have a Facebook Group. If you didn't get an invite, and you want one, let me know and I'll send an email with a link to click on for access.

If you don't have a picture in the EZ Membership App, and you would like one, please send me a photo by email, or you can have one taken at a rally. If there are two or more people/pets in the photo, they must be close together because the photo will need to be cropped.

#378  
Judy K. Koch  
Arlington, TX  
2004 Concourse

Members represent the following Chinook ownership: model years range from 1993 through 2005:

Concourse	54
Premier	21
Glacier	15
Destiny	13
Cascade	3
Summit	2
Eagle	1
Baja	1



**2015 CLUB DUES OF \$35 PER COACH WAS DUE ON OCTOBER 1**  
**MAKE YOUR CHECK PAYABLE TO**



**“Chinook Camping Club” and mail to: Chinook Camping Club, Linda Stamper, Treasurer**

**219 Monte Vista Drive, Statesville, NC 28625**

**IMPORTANT NOTICE**

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# CHINOOK CHOW—RECIPES FROM THE ROAD

It's winter soup time! Here's a healthy option you can eat—as much as you want!!

## Bottomless Veggie Soup

From Midtown Magazine

Makes about 12 servings. We call it bottomless as you can eat as much as you want and remain guilt-free!

### Ingredients:

2 medium garlic cloves, minced  
 1 medium onion, diced  
 2 medium carrots, diced  
 1 medium sweet red pepper, diced  
 1 medium celery stalk, diced  
 2 small zucchini, diced  
 2 cups green cabbage, shredded  
 2 cups cauliflower, shredded  
 2 cups broccoli, small florets  
 6 cups water, or enough to cover the veggies  
 1 tbsp. hot sauce  
 1 tbsp. soy sauce  
 1/2 tsp salt or to taste  
 1/4 tsp black pepper or to taste  
 2 tbsp fresh lemon juice, optional

### Directions

Put garlic, vegetables and water into large sauce pot. Cover and bring to a boil over high heat; reduce heat to low and simmer 10 minutes.

Season to taste with hot sauce, soy sauce, salt, pepper and lemon juice.



## Snickerdoodle Muffins, a great winter breakfast!

Yield: 2 dozen

### Ingredients:

#### MUFFINS:

6 tablespoons butter, softened  
 1/2 cup granulated white sugar  
 1 large egg  
 1/2 cup milk  
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
 1 1/2 cups Gold Medal® All-Purpose Flour  
 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder  
 3/4 teaspoon cream of tartar  
 1/4 teaspoon salt  
 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

#### TOPPING:

1/3 cup granulated white sugar  
 1 teaspoon cinnamon  
 2 tablespoons butter, melted

### Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Spray a mini muffin pan with nonstick spray.
2. In a medium bowl, use an electric mixer to combine the butter and sugar until fluffy. Add the egg, milk and vanilla and mix to combine.
3. In a separate bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, cream of tartar, salt and cinnamon.
4. Add the flour mixture to the egg mixture a little at a time. Mix just until the flour mixture is incorporated. Don't overmix.
5. Fill each muffin tin 3/4 full. Bake for 9 to 11 minutes. If you're making regular-sized muffins, bake 14 to 16 minutes.
6. In a small bowl, combine the sugar and cinnamon. Remove the muffins from the tin. Dip the tops of the muffins in the melted butter and roll the tops in the cinnamon-sugar mixture. These are best served warm.

SOURCE: RecipeGirl.com (Recipe shared from [The Girl Who Ate Everything](#) by Christy Denney (Front Table Books 2014))



## Chinook Cook Book??

We're still looking for the best way to put together a Chinook Cookbook. Do you have favorite on-the-road or rally recipes to share? Send them and any suggestions about how we might put together a cookbook, particularly one to which we can continue to add, to Diane Poole or Eileen Disbrow and let's see if we can figure out the best way to catalog our great food! Let's discuss it at the next rally!

## Rally Schedule for 2015

Rally Chair Cynthia (Cricket) Jones has been busy this winter finalizing an amazing slate of rallies all the way through 2016! Pull out your calendars and start planning your trips to join the Chinookers at these fantastic destinations!

### 2015 Chinook Camping Club Rally Dates

**January: Sunday 11th – Wednesday 14th**

**Ocala Sun RV Resort** (changed – same 2007) \$37.00  
2559 SW Hwy 484 Ocala, FL 34473 (352-307-1100) (fax-307-9100) [ocalasunrvresort.com](http://ocalasunrvresort.com)  
Email – [info@ocalasunrvresort.com](mailto:info@ocalasunrvresort.com)  
HOST: Fred Cummings (26 sites)  
(Cut off date: December 12th 2014, speak with Jennifer only)



**March : Sunday 29th – exit Wednesday April 1st before noon\*\*\*\***

**Rivers End – Tybee Island, GA** \$48.00F (W&E-\$38) mid-season rate (25 sites)  
5 Fort Avenue • PO Box 988 • Tybee Island, Georgia 31328  
Tel: 800.786.1016 • Email: [riversend@cityoftybee.org](mailto:riversend@cityoftybee.org)  
HOST: Susan Martin (tentative)  
[Riversendcampground.com](http://Riversendcampground.com)  
(Cut off date: February 11, 2015)



**July :Monday July 27th – exit Thursday 30th**

**Alpine Lake RV Resort** – 78 Heath Road Corinth, NY  
12822 \$39.00 800-576-8541 (25 sites)  
[alpinelakervresort.com](http://alpinelakervresort.com)  
[alpinelake\\_mgr@equitylifestyle.com](mailto:alpinelake_mgr@equitylifestyle.com) / 518-654-6260  
Peter E. Temeles - Resort Manager / Fax: 518-654-7652  
HOST: Rebecca Williams, Cricket Jones and Mike Sloop  
(Cut off date: May 26th 2015)



We encourage members to take advantage of their time spent here at the Resort by staying a little later or arriving a little earlier to enjoy the Northeast during the summer, however, it is important to note that the end of July is during our peak season so weekends (Friday & Saturday) are always in high demand so space is limited. Please contact for questions. Coming in on Sunday and exiting on Fridays should be no problem although we could not guarantee those sites would be with the Chinook Club.

**October: Sunday 11th – exit Wednesday 14th –**

**Bethpage Camp-Resort** / P.O. Box 178, Urbanna, VA 23175  
679 Brown's Lane, Urbanna / (804) 758-4349 / Fax# 804-758-0209 (35 sites) Catered Annual Dinner  
\$39.95+tax - - 2015 (Michelle – contact) <http://www.bethpagecamp.com>  
HOST: Don & Jo Phillips & Rana & Larry Hull





## Rally Schedule for 2016

**NOTICE: THIS RALLY MAY MOVE TO FLAMINGO LAKE BY MEMBERS' REQUEST: January :Thursday 14th – Sunday 17th – Tampa, FL - Lazy Days Rally Park**

\$42 – Bkfs & lunch included. 621- Country Rd 579 Seffner, FL 33584

(800-350-6731) [www.lazydays.com](http://www.lazydays.com) \*\*\*NOTE: this is during the big RV show and if you would like to stay Sunday & Monday call early. RV club coming in on Tuesday and not spaces will be available. (30 sites reserved)

HOST: (Volunteer Host needed, contact Cricket!)

(Cut off date is December 13th 2015 – site not guaranteed after cut-off)



**April : Sunday 24th – Wednesday 27th**

**Natural Bridge KOA, Natural Bridge, VA**

\$40 – 214 Kildeer Lane, Natural Bridge, VA 24578

(800-562-8514) (25 sites)

Info – 540-291-2770 <http://www.naturalbridgekoa.com/camp@naturalbridgekoa.info>

HOST: Charles and Nancy Breeding



**July: Monday 18th – Thursday 21st**

**Pine Valley KOA, White River Junction, Vermont**

\$50 – 3700 Woodstock Rd. White River Junction, Vermont 05001 (20 sites)

Reserve: 800-562-1621 / Info: 802-296-6711 /

quecheekoa@comcast.net <http://www.pinevalleyrv.com/>

HOST: (Volunteer Host needed, contact Cricket!)

Speak with Cindy ONLY\* 802-296-0014\*\*\*\*\*we can have more sites if people call and reserve early\*\*\* (cut off date is June 1st 2016)



**October Sunday 2nd – Wednesday 5th**

**Mountain Pines CG - Champion, PA**

\$34 – 1662 Indian Creek Valley Rd. Champion, PA 15622 (30 sites)

Reserve & Info: 724-455-7411 /

[www.mountainpinescamping.com](http://www.mountainpinescamping.com)

HOST: \_ (Volunteer Host needed, contact Cricket!)

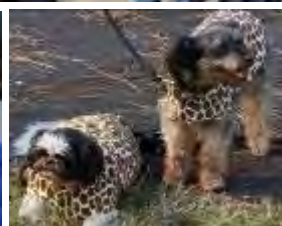
(Cut off date is August 16th 2016)



**Rally hosts needed, please contact Cynthia (Cricket) Jones at [cmjfreedom@outlook.com](mailto:cmjfreedom@outlook.com)**

Plan as much or as little as you like! Rally hosts may coordinate with the campground for the meeting facilities, and with those Chinookers attending to provide the club sponsored meals etc. Hosts are free to plan special events or meals, entertainment or activities and are not expected to assume financial costs. It's a great way to contribute on a one-time (or more if you want) basis to the activities of the club. The more we spread around the tasks, the less each individual has to do! And we have an extraordinarily willing group of rally attendees who jump in to help cook, clean up, share a hobby, entertainment, information or experience!!



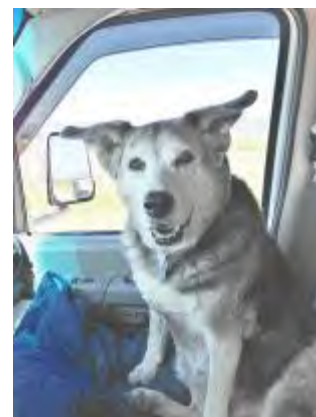


*Thanks to Nita and Klaus  
Wilkinson and  
Eileen and  
Russ Disbrow*





## Living My Dreams: Across the United States by Cyndy Gabrys



When I bought my Chinook back in 2007 I dreamt of traveling across country to see this wonderful country I am proud to call home. I thought it would be a perfect way to travel back then and finally in 2014 I found my dream coming true. Just a bit of background about me. I have been semi-retired since 1998. I decided to get out of the rat race and really enjoy life. Living in the DC area changed in 2001 when the Pentagon was hit by terrorists. I had to make a change and decided my favorite vacation spot would become home, so I moved to the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Now the OBX, as it's commonly known, is frequently in the bull's eye for those nasty hurricanes that travel up the East coast and often require evacuation since we are surrounded by water. An RV seemed to be a perfect solution and I decided the Chinook was just what I needed. Might as well use the Chinook during calm weather as well and I started dreaming about all the places I could explore.

Planning this trip took me many hours of research. I have never traveled during the summer months, I'm usually working somewhere, so I had no idea how busy the roads and campgrounds would be. I decided I did not want the extra burden of finding a place to park every night and included camp grounds while planning my route. On the positive side – it took a lot of stress away knowing that I had a reserved spot to stop and by making reservations in advance I was able to spread the trip costs over many months rather than having to pay all fees during the trip. On the negative side – it locked me in to a specific amount of time in one area and there were times I would have enjoyed extra days. My next trip will probably have more flexibility in the schedule because I found there is usually some place to stay that has space available. It's time to get on the road with my traveling companion, Tipper...

### Throw Me Something Mister

My first major destination was New Orleans. I'd never been there and I might as well go when the big party is in progress – Mardi Gras. My route took me through Flovilla Georgia with a short stop at Indian Springs State Park. I always enjoy the Georgia State Parks. They're clean, secure and usually have laundry facilities available. Indian Springs is known for the natural springs found in the park and available for drinking water. I filled a bottle with water and the smell of rotten eggs was strong from all the natural minerals. The camp host told me to leave the bottle open for a few hours to release the smell and the water would be fine. He was right. That was delicious water!

Florida State Parks are usually a good choice as well. On this trip I enjoyed Falling Waters SP near Chipley, FL in the panhandle



section of Florida. It's a small park with a nice trail to enjoy that took me to the waterfall. It was the end of February but the park was almost full.

I continued my travels to New Orleans and set up camp in Fontainebleau SP near Mandeville, LA. This state park is located on

the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain and the toll bridge crossing the lake is just a short drive away. The park is popular, especially during Mardi Gras, and can have poor drainage after heavy rain but the sites are paved so there is some relief. I especially liked the location, not a long commute into New Orleans but away from all the celebrations. New Orleans is definitely a party town during Mardi Gras and there can be high crime areas but I never felt threatened while enjoying the parades. I enjoyed 5 days in the area but it was difficult to get around because of parade route closures. I'll return for another visit during normal days so I can really enjoy all the city has to offer.



The skyline on a beautiful day and a ride across the lake. Spanish moss fills the huge trees that line the roads in Fontainebleau State Park. Plenty of places to walk, a beach on the lake and beautiful trees providing shade. I enjoyed a day trip to the Jean Lafitte Bayou National Preserve, exploring the trails along the Bayou Coquille and the wildlife. I learned I need to take into consideration the urban effect when planning a visit. The bigger the city the longer the commute to explore areas within and around the city so more days/time is needed to explore.





And, of course, there were plenty of Mardi Gras parades to celebrate Carnival before Ash Wednesday and the season of Lent. Mystic societies or Krewes parade through the streets, offering throws to those watching the parade. 'Throw me something Mister' fills the air as people *Laissez les bon temps rouler* – Let the good times roll. There are numerous parades each day and traffic patterns are impacted by the street closures. I found leaving the city after a parade one night to be very frustrating – my GPS guide politely told me to turn on streets that were closed and I had to find different routes. I would almost swear the GPS voice was getting frustrated! I finally got around the closures, back on a route to the campground and saw some parts of New Orleans that I had not planned to see – at midnight. I left New Orleans filled with hope for the return of this special city. They continue to feel some effects from Hurricane Katrina but have redeveloped many of the areas that were destroyed. What a wonderful city to enjoy.



## Big Bend Country

Next stop – Texas and time with family. I spent time visiting family in the Dallas and San Antonio areas and did not do a lot of sightseeing. I stayed at a nice State Park about 60 miles east of Dallas – Lake Tawakoni State Park in Wills Point. The park was very clean, spaces were large with good distance between your neighbor and the lake is a popular fishing location. One camper caught a 45 lb catfish while I was there. That was one huge UGLY fish! The only negative perhaps would be the \$5 daily park entrance fee was charged rather than waived because of the camping fee. Not a deal breaker but noted. I did take time to visit a nearby town with a wonderful park.



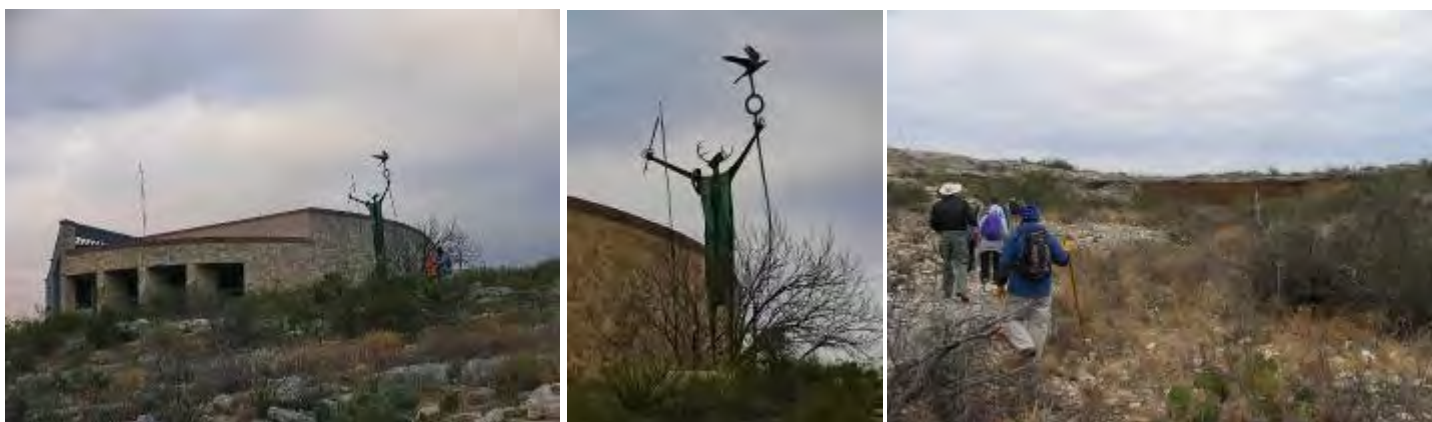
Parrott Park was established by Bill and Gloria Parrott, residents of Lindale, TX, and is filled with their collection of artifacts. The park is free but they gladly accept donations. What a special variety on display. Musical instruments, a moonshine still on one side of the park and a small Chapel across the lake. They even have a Model T which Mr. Parrott would drive in the town parades.



After a few wonderful days with my Dallas family I traveled down to visit my San Antonio family. I found an Army Corp park between Austin and San Antonio that was convenient for my visiting. Potters Creek Park is located on the north shore of Canyon Lake in Canyon Lake, TX. I relaxed with family and also enjoyed a day trip to the Fredericksburg, TX area – popular for antique shops and LBJ country – Johnson City. A beautiful campsite on a popular lake, especially during Spring break. There weren't many trails to hike but I enjoyed walking the roads within the park. Plenty of places around the area to take a nice walk, including the dam nearby.



I continue my route to Big Bend National Park with a two night stop at Seminole Canyon State Park located near Comstock, TX. Seminole Canyon is closed to general public access so I signed up to join a Ranger led hike into the upper Canyon. The day started off cool – mid March temperatures – and a nice size group gathered at the Visitor Center. The Ranger shared information about the surrounding area, the Indian tribes that originally inhabited the canyons and kept us moving over sometimes rough terrain. This is rattlesnake country and I always kept a watchful eye open for activity. The 2 mile hike was about 4 hours with a short break mid-way. We saw petroglyphs, impressive rock formations and the remains of Army campsites. This was a great introduction stop into the Southwest section of Texas.



Photos include the Visitor Center, Indian Sculpture keeping watch over the canyon, starting our hike, Upper Canyon, horse drawing on canyon wall, break time under the bat caves and lower canyon view. It was just a short stay – the big park just a few hours down the road and I am looking forward to my first visit to Big Bend National Park.

The Chisos Mountains, blue skies, desert, flowers, Rio Grande River and 801,163 acres to explore. Just to name a few of the highlights. Big Bend National Park was established in 1944. Early explorers called the area El Despoblado – the uninhabited land – because it is so remote and wild. The curve of the Rio Grand River gives the Park its name and is the international boundary between the USA and Mexico. This natural border changes and our border restrictions have changed as well. Travel between the two countries requires proper documentation but this does not stop Mexican Nationals from crossing the river to sell souvenir items. Signage reminds visitors it is illegal to purchase items from these merchants and is subject to confiscation. I watched merchants cross the river to check on their 'donation' displays, encountering horseback riders while hiking the Boquillas Canyon trail. And Jose offered to sing Mexican songs – for a \$5 donation. He even offered to take a photo of me – with my camera - no charge. I declined.

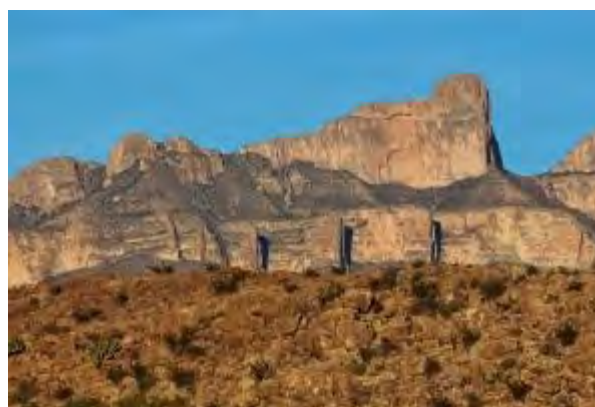
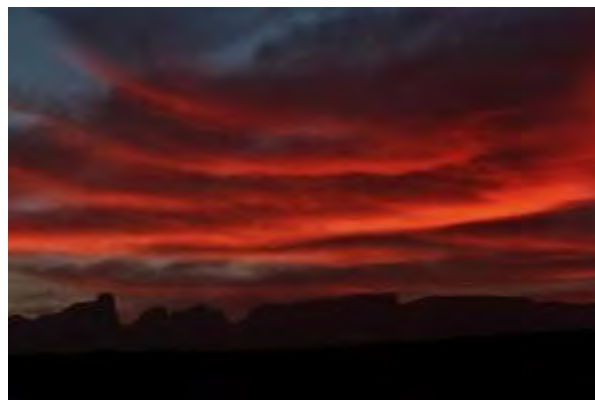


I enjoyed 5 nights in Big Bend, dry camping in Rio Grande Village campground. There is a campground with hookups, but I wanted to take advantage of the National Park Pass and since it was mid March I didn't anticipate temperatures that would require air conditioning. The day temps were pleasant and the nights cooled off for some perfect sleep after a day of exploring. And there are plenty of places to explore – a ranger led hike at Hot Springs, Chisos Basin, Santa Elena Canyon, Terlingua and a lot of stops along the way.

A beautiful location and I hope to return one day. I don't think I would want to visit during the heat of the summer, but winter season might be interesting. Photos include Texas Blue Bonnets, Big Bend Chisos Mountains, Hot Springs settlement, Campground, Century tree, Javalina, beautiful sunsets, Vermillion Flycatcher, Sierra de Carmen Mexico, Santa Elena Canyon.







I left Big Bend with pure enjoyment and an enhanced anticipation for the rest of my trip. What an incredible experience this trip will be. One more stop in Texas at Davis Mountain State Park near Ft Davis, TX and a visit to the McDonald Observatory nearby. The State Park has a few trails to hike, the night sky is spectacular and the local

Javalinas feel free to walk through the campsites and help themselves to what ever food is left out. They have no fear of people and limited fear of pets. I kept my distance from them. My main purpose for this stop was to enjoy a tour and star gazing party at McDonald Observatory. This area of Texas is one of the best places to enjoy the night sky because there is little to no artificial light pollution. I sat in an amphitheater setting under the night sky and saw constellations, satellites in orbit, the planets Jupiter and Mercury, asteroids and a few shooting stars. The staff manned a few telescopes and I could walk around to get a closer view of Mercury. It was a very enjoyable evening and a fantastic way to explore the night sky. Reservations are recommended but not required.

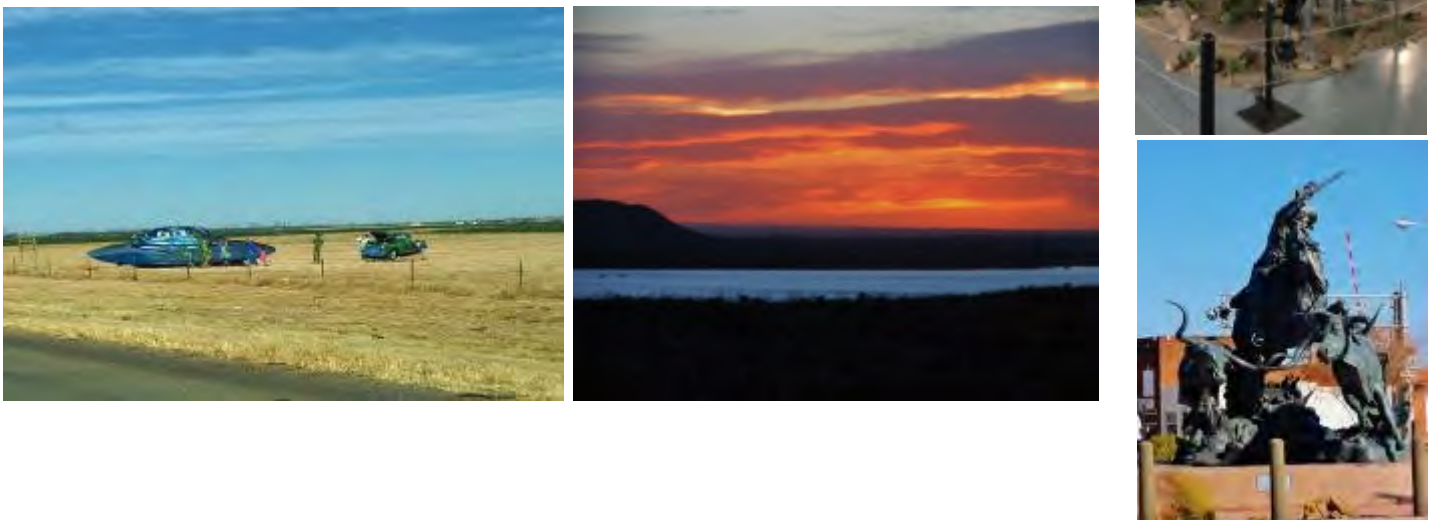
## The Southwest

New Mexico – Land of Enchantment. I'm headed to Brantley Lake State Park to set up a home base for a few days of exploring. The park is located north of Carlsbad and a reasonable commute to visit Carlsbad Caverns. It's a nice State park located with view of Brantley Lake but no direct access to the lake from the campground. The water level is very low due to extreme drought conditions and no one is boating or fishing. I'm ready for a cave adventure and travel over to Carlsbad Caverns to enjoy the King's Palace Guided tour. This tour starts below ground and descends to the deepest portion of the cave, 830 feet below the surface. The hike is on a paved trail and I enjoyed the ranger's presentation. After finishing the one mile ranger tour I continue exploring on the self guided one mile tour around the Big Room route. This takes another 2 hours

so that gives you an idea of just how big this room is. Photos include the Big Room, a column The hike is on a paved trail and I enjoyed the ranger's presentation. After finishing the one mile ranger tour I continue exploring on the self guided one mile tour around the Big Room route. This takes another two hours so that gives you an idea of just how big this room is. Photos include the Big Room, a column formation, tour route, King's Palace and Hall of the Giants, a stalactite joins a stalagmite, jellyfish, Papoose room.



And a trip to New Mexico requires a visit to Roswell, home of the UFO Museum and Research Center. It was a fun way to spend a few hours but I must admit I am not convinced. The ride to Roswell took me through dairy country and I finally saw some long horns. It was a sculpture in the center of a town enroute to Roswell. Photos include a UFO roadside display, UFO museum display, Longhorns, a sunset over Brantley Lake.





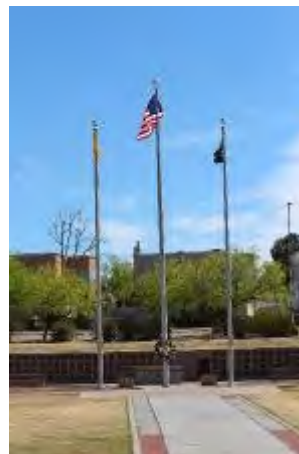


Albuquerque is my next stop. It will be a great visit with family as well as visiting the city. My cousin offers to be my tour guide and we enjoy a visit to the Petroglyph National Monument area. There are hundreds of drawings at various locations and we visit the Rinconada Canyon area and the Volcanoes section which offers a close up view of the area's geology. We travel west of the city and visit the El Malpais National Monument area which includes La Ventana natural Arch, lava tubes and large lava fields. I camped at Enchanted Trails RV Park while in the Albuquerque area and was happy with the facility which is located right next to a large Camping World. The park is mainly for snowbirders and long term residents but it was busy with overnite activity as well. It's located on a major highway – I40, there was easy access to the city to the east and points west. I plan to return to the area again – I've just got to see the Hot Air Balloon Fiesta in October. Photos include Petroglyphs, old campers on display, lava field view from Sandstone Bluffs area, and hot air balloons.



It was great to spend time with my cousin but my visit was short and it was time to continue my westward trek. I head south toward Las Cruces for a few days to explore the Gila Cliff Dwellings, White Sands and points in between. My cousin suggested a stop in Hatch, NM since I'm a fan of hot peppers and that was a fun experience. Hatch is a very small town and is well known for the hot peppers grown in the area. Traveling through Las Cruces enroute to White Sands NM, I stop at the Veterans Memorial identified on my Roadside America app. This

small park honors the all service branch veterans with special recognition given to those involved in the Bataan Death March in March of 1942. The larger than life statue depicts two soldiers supporting a third as they, and 78,000 Americans and Filipinos, are forced to walk 65 miles to prison camps. Over 11,000 did not complete the march. The footprints in front of the statue were made by 38 survivors of the March from New Mexico.







White Sands National Monument is located on the north end of the Chihuahuan Desert in the Tularosa basin. The area, 275 square miles, is the largest gypsum dune field in the world. They are always changing, influenced by strong southwest winds. The dunes reminded me of Jockey's Ridge State Park near my house. This is a severe landscape with little vegetation but plants and animals do exist and adapt to the changing conditions.

Another day trip found me at the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument located about 45 miles north of Silver City NM in the Gila National Forest. The road to the Dwellings is very scenic, but very winding and it takes about 3 hours to get there from the campground. Well worth the time and drive

though. There are more than 40 sites documented within the 533 acres. I spent my visit exploring 5 of the 7 caves that are

grouped together in the Cliff Dweller Canyon. The one mile loop took me 180 feet above the canyon floor and probably followed a route similar to what the dwellers would follow for access to water and food. The evidence found by archeologists indicates many different groups of people inhabited the area over several thousand years, yet many questions still remain. That adds to the beauty of the area. Photos include Bataan March and Veterans Park, White Sands dunes and wind formed sculpture, Gila Cliff dwellings and area traveled to get there.

