## WTE column of August 1, 2015. Editor's headline: "Traveling? Try this out" CST of same date: "Traveling can lead to new friendships"

Forty years ago, staying in a motel was a treat. No more. Those days are gone for good. Today's motels are filled with former employees now working as "independent" contractors whose bosses send them all over the country. Some must be at the job site by five in the morning; hence, the motel din starts predawn. The late shift, arriving after ten, ensures nighttime disturbance.

It is not surprising, then, that travelers choose other means of overnight stays, from Couchsurfing to bed & breakfasts. Retirees with agendas of hefty auto-tours tend to prefer travel clubs that allow overnight stays in member homes. In exchange for a small gratuity, guests have a place to sleep and take showers, plus breakfast that allows time to chat. The visits usually leave everyone in good spirits.

One such arrangement is atc, the Affordable Travel Club, whose members obtain email or hard-copy directories from which to choose where and with whom. I use atc mostly to travel to adult children in need of grandparent help.

Travel season can be a busy time for hosts. "For a while it seemed we ran a bed and breakfast," a Casper couple told me with whom I stay whenever an event lasts late into night. Their solution? They invited neighbors to join atc so there would be others offering accommodations.

Sometimes on my way to California I stay with a couple in Park City. Jerry is a retired high-school music- and band teacher who now directs his own band. He and his crew play and sing anything from boogie to jazz to swing. The band performs at upscale retirement homes in Salt Lake City. One Saturday evening his spouse took me to one such venue. I marveled at how admirably Jerry maintained his musical ear—and voice.

As a host I have encountered couples who regale me with travelogues, as if convinced they must enliven their host's boring existence. Others take their cues from visual evidence and structure conversations around, e.g., my veggie garden and compost bins, or the books on my shelves, or the sheet music about the house.

I hosted a couple from California who shared tales about the foster children they adopted and the youngsters' unevenly successful lives. Another couple—repeat visitors—are wheat farmers in Crete, Nebraska, who express lively interest in my farm land. Twice I have hosted a woman with a disability who talks nonstop. She tells me about her narcolepsy, a condition that interests me because my youngest is afflicted with it. Still, narcolepsy does not explain her compulsive chattiness.

Two Floridians dealt with summer heat by joining a bike tour up north. A Canadian couple traveled south to escape the winter blues. An elderly couple, negotiating with difficulty the stairs in my home, may have planned their trip as a last hurrah.

I recently hosted a Texas couple on their second stay in my home. In between, I visited them on my way to someplace else. Now we are practically friends; certainly we are aware of each other's proclivities. Julia, from a ranching family that raises Herefords—her brother runs the business—decided they must visit the Wyoming Hereford Ranch near Cheyenne, while Wilton told of singing with the Houston symphony, and a church choir, and yet another group.

Wilton also plays a mean guitar. He grabbed one of my instruments and riffed snatches from "Malaguena" with exquisite tremolos. Then he decided to teach me (from memory) a Bach fugue he and his brother played years ago; I convinced him to work with sheet music instead. We played our way through an exercise for two lutes I happened to have practiced. Wilton had to learn on the fly. He is a quick study.

On their way home from a wedding in Chicago, Wilton and Julia called from the road on short notice, having looped from Lake Michigan to Canada to Devil's Tower. When they heard that Cheyenne Frontier Days was underway, they decided to take an extra day for the festivities.

Frontier Day morning the couple left my house early for a good spot to watch the parade. They did not return until 9 PM, full of enthusiasm over the rodeo and Frontier Park offerings. They even took in an auction near the Depot of Performance Horses, offered by Twombly Auctioners. Buyers from Texas to California, not to mention Canada and Mexico, bid on horses up to 30 and 40 grand. The highest bid fetched 57 thousand dollars.

Hosting strangers in one's home is not for everyone, nor is setting out on a 1200-mile auto tour without knowing the people who will greet you at each pit stop. But if you are game to traveling while experimenting with social relations, atc may be your way to begin.