

Wyoming Tribune Eagle of October 28, 2016: "10-day circuit of Western parks"

This is the fourth visit to the U.S. of my friend and cousin, Edith Possel. Last time she was here, when I lived in South Dakota, we went through the Black Hills to Devil's Tower on the way to my son's family near Wyoming's Vedauwoo Wilderness. Then we toured the Grand Tetons and Yellowstone National Park.

"Remember Jenny Lake? We hiked to Inspiration Point," I said as we discussed our upcoming travel plans.

Of course," she said. "The young man with the flute."

"The flutist at the waterfall."

"He played Native American music."

"Yes." I had given Edith a CD, "How the West was Lost," that feature hanging melodies, some played on Native-American flute.

This time, my cousin had a special request. "Rolf came home with these wonderful pictures of the Grand Canyon. He hiked down into the canyon and then up again. I want to see the Grand Canyon in the worst way."

Early on, when my family lived in California and our children spend time with each other's families, her son, after staying with us, had struck out across the US via bus, rail, and youth hostels.

"I don't think you and I are up to that kind of a hike," I said. "But there are mule trains into the canyon, back up the next day. Te downside is, we'd have to stay in the lodge overnight."

"I don't know about riding a mule."

"We could just visit the North Rim. There's a lovely hike to Bright Angel Point. A bit steep on the uptake but rated "easy" in the Hiker's Guide. A friend in Prescott took me once."

"You know, a German friend told me, if I'm in the area, I absolutely must make time for Bryce Canyon. He claimed it's even more impressive than Grand Canyon."

"I'd have to agree. Darold and I went through Zion and Bryce many years ago." After a bit of fast thinking I suggested a loop that,over a period of-ten days or so, would include several of Utah's famous parks. Edith readily agreed.

Next, I explained U.S. travel clubs, explaining that I don't sleep well in motels—A a light

sleeper, I tend to be easily disturbed by outside noise. “I love to stay with travel club members,” I said. “Their homes are off the beaten path. They tend to be outdoor enthusiasts who like to hike, bike, snowshoe or ski. Often they love to hunt and fish.”

Once Edith agreed to the arrangement, I telephoned to stay with atc (Affordable Travel Club) members in Park City and St. George. The latter couple would host us for four nights. On the fifth day, on leaving St. George, we would visit Arches, which is adjacent to the Colorado River. Our return to Wyoming would lead us to Breckenridge, Colorado, to an atc couple whose cabin (at 10,000 feet) is not far from Aspen and other famous ski resorts.

I had stayed with the Park City couple, John and Jean Ann, before; indeed their guest book showed a photo of myself and Qi Deng, the Chinese friend with whom I visited back in 2010. Then as now I admired our hosts’ devotion to music.

At eighty, John is ever rigorous on the sax while leading his band. He’s a mean vocalist as well. The Mixed Nuts play daily, except of Sundays, at upscale retirement centers in Salt Lake City.

We decided to begin our travels on a Sunday, so that we might visit with John as well as his spouse Jean Ann.

“We have a surprise for you,” I said after we settled into chit-chat and snacks on the evening of our arrival.

The surprise was a German song we practiced en route west on Wyoming’s I-80. As we concluded the song, which we presented in harmony, John jumped up and reproduced the melody on his piano.

“I, too, have a surprise for you,” he said afterwards, stepping to his computer desk. There he extracted a folder. “For your travels,” he said, handing over a thick packet.

During my talk with Jean Ann to arrange our stay, I mentioned our St. George plans. She passed the information to her spouse, who went online to extract information on what he considered “must-see” Utah national and state parks. The former included Zion, Bryce, Grand Staircase National Monument, Capitol Reef, and Arches.

The next morning was rainy and cold. While our hosts were delighted with the rain—“it hasn’t rained all summer and our trees need the moisture”—we decided not to linger at the Great Salt Lake. Instead, we headed south. When the weather cleared, we stopped at Fremont Indian State Park and Museum, with its displays of living quarters unearthed by Explorer Fremont, whose inhabitants arrived in 800 CE but disappeared three hundred years later for unknown reasons.

After that it was on to St. George and the day trips that would take us to the geologic wonders of Arizona, Utah, and Colorado.