

Back in the Saddle

Contributed by Larry Lawless
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Well, my original intention was to take a leisurely morning in Amarillo, then head for Colorado about 10:00, but after my wife reminded me that West Texas A&M University (Bart's alma mater) was just 15 miles down the road, I decided to move out early.

WT was in the middle of a band camp, so lots of students running around, but I found Dr. Susan Martin Tariq, Professor of Percussion, fairly easily. She looked up and said, "Larry, what are you doing here?" So I told her, "Well, I woke up this morning in Stephenville and thought, it's been too long since I've seen Susan, so I drove over here." She thought that was funny. Anyway, very generously let me into a marimba practice room, so once again, I got to remind my hands what it feels like to hold mallets. Thanks, Susan! Afterwards, she gave me a tour of their new facilities, under construction. Going to be very nice, if they get it done in time for the start of classes.

By this time, it was a little before 10:00, so I headed back north, passing through Amarillo and up the Texas Panhandle. Miles and miles of miles and miles, but starkly beautiful and amazing in the scope of the agriculture. Crossed into New Mexico and stopped for lunch in Clayton. In looking for a unique, non-chain type place, I found the Eklund Hotel and Saloon, dating from the 1800's. It wasn't until I was seated that I remembered eating here 11 years before, with my family (well, the twins were yet to be born, but they were there) the last time we went to see the Walter family in Boulder.

Back on the highway to find the stretch from Clayton to Raton all under construction, speed limit 45. I took advantage of the snail's pace to pull over at lots of roadside parks and Historical Markers. One park had a posted sign saying, "Warning! Watch for Snakes". The trail is ever fraught with danger.

Finally, through the Raton pass into Colorado and the real mountains, driving with one hand on the wheel, snapping pictures with the other. Stopped briefly in the quaint town of Trinidad. If I ever get wealthy and retire, this is a place I could move to. Historic buildings, beautiful scenery. But daylight's burning, and back in the saddle again, drove the I-25 corridor that parallels the Rocky Mountains into Colorado Springs. With a loud "whoopie ty yi yay", or reasonable facsimile, it strikes me that I'm almost there. Now the fun really begins.