



In Search of Eldorado



Day 24
Monday
January 28th
 Laughlin, NV
 to
 Between Franconia, AZ
 and Powell, AZ
Weather
 Great today. 70's and sunny

Hello to Family & Friends

I left the RV at the casino this morning and readied my bike for a day in the saddle.

The photo above tells you that I am visiting the Laughlin Labyrinths, Walkable Rock Art.

Somebody made circle, square and triangle labyrinths with rocks in the desert sand/gravel.



This is an overview of two of them with the Riverside Hotel on the horizon. Below is an overview of four more. You can even see my bike in the far lower left.

Eldorado

By Edgar Allen Poe

Gaily bedight,
 A gallant knight,
 In sunshine and in shadow,
 Had journeyed long,
 Singing a song,
 In search of Eldorado.

But he grew old—
 This knight so bold—
 And o'er his heart a shadow—
 Fell as he found
 No spot of ground
 That looked like Eldorado.

And, as his strength
 Failed him at length,
 He met a pilgrim shadow—
 'Shadow,' said he,
 'Where can it be—
 This land of Eldorado?'

'Over the Mountains
 Of the Moon,
 Down the Valley of the Shadow,
 Ride, boldly ride,'
 The shade replied,—
 'If you seek for Eldorado!'

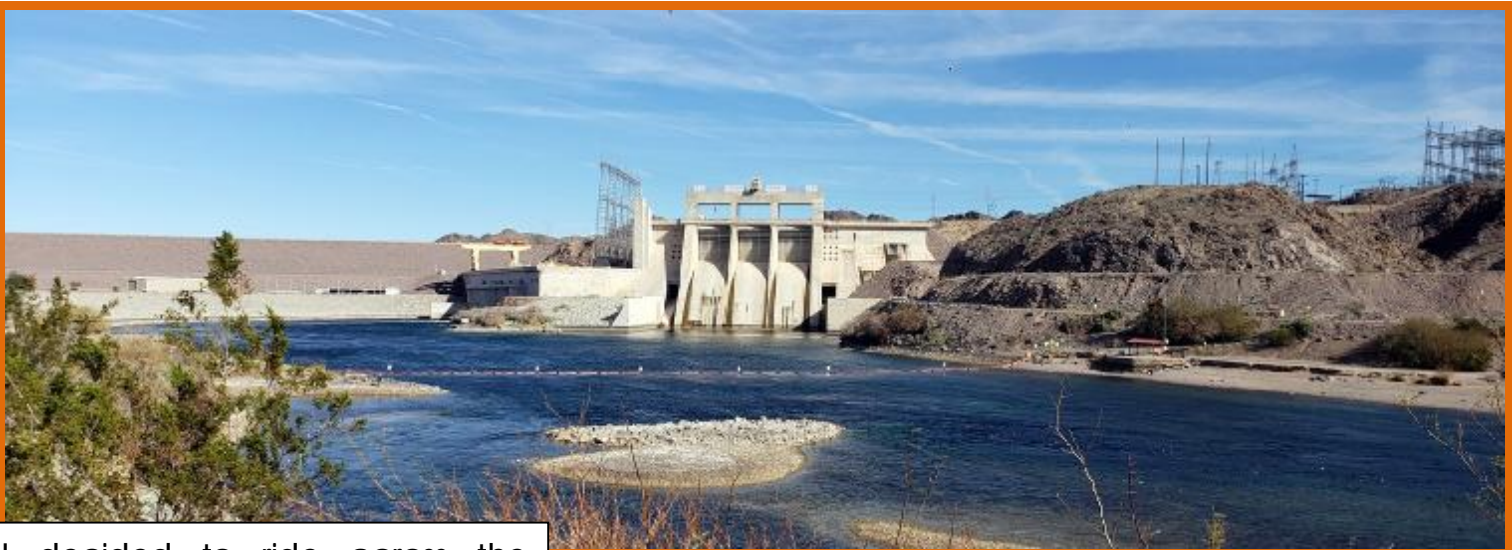


I will admit that someone went to a lot of work laying these out, carting the rocks and setting them in place. Below is the largest and, I believe, first one. Below that is a triangle layout.





Next stop was the Pioneer Casino and Hotel. I had hopes for this one after reading that the entire place had a cowboy theme. With high expectations I wheeled my bike through the front door and up to the bar. "I don't see any bike rack out front. Is there somewhere I can lock this up?" I asked the bartender. He looked at me a little strangely and stated "I don't think you'll find too many bike racks in Laughlin. Maybe lock it to the railing out back." So that's what I did. Then I moseyed through the casino. My smile turned upside down. Just a casino.



I decided to ride across the Colorado River, back into Arizona, and try the Colorado River Museum, only to find it had moved about 3-4 miles down the road. I was headed back to the Casino when I saw the visitor's center. A quick stop, funny looks when I wheeled the bike inside, and I found out that the Colorado River Museum is closed on Mondays and that there is an extensive layout of bike trails right nearby. In fact, one of those trails leads across the Davis Dam just upstream. Excellent! I took the photo above from the bike path.





North from the top of the dam is Lake Mohave



South from the top of Davis Dam is the powerhouse and the Colorado River

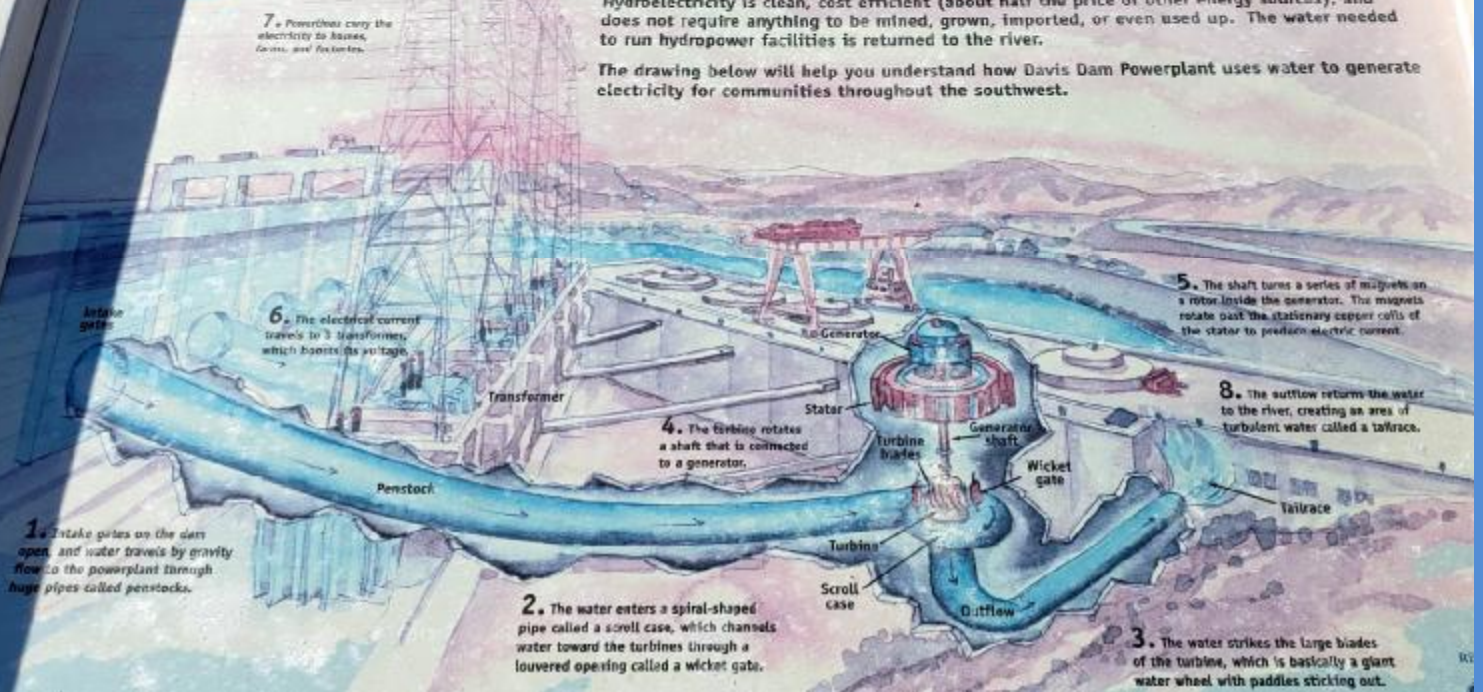
In the photo above you can see the bike path I rode along the bottom of the hill to the right. In the far distance you can still see the Riverside Hotel Tower.

Only foot and bike traffic are allowed on top of the dam, so I had the place to myself. However, I think Mother Nature took me literally when I asked for the wind to be "ever at my back". The wind from the north was fierce today, yesterday, and the day before.

Fuel for the Future

About 90% of all the electricity from renewable energy sources is generated with hydropower. Hydroelectricity is clean, cost efficient (about half the price of other energy sources), and does not require anything to be mined, grown, imported, or even used up. The water needed to run hydropower facilities is returned to the river.

The drawing below will help you understand how Davis Dam Powerplant uses water to generate electricity for communities throughout the southwest.

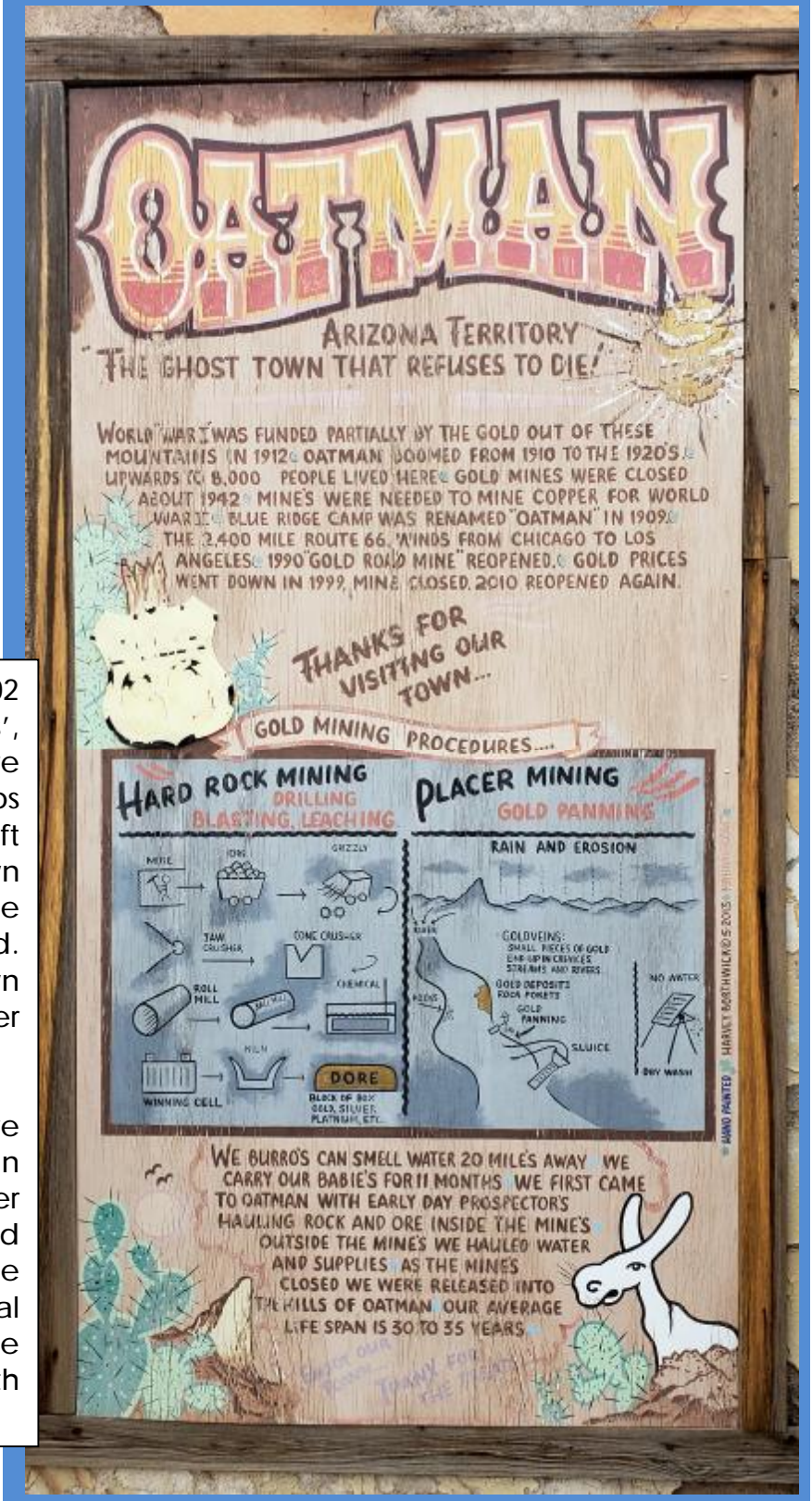


This was the only informational plaque I took a photo of. Hoover Dam seemed to be more interested in how it was built. I suppose the tour explained how it works. But in this one, all the parts of the dam and how electricity is generated are explained. And everything on the plaque is laid out right in front of you. Very well done. 14 miles on the bike today.



Out in front of the Bullhead Area Chamber of Commerce I found the world's largest desert tortoise. Though this creature looks like it could take off your leg with one bite, have no fear; desert tortoises are vegetarian. So unless you're dressed up as a carrot or head of lettuce you should be safe. According to Roadside America 'The tortoise, which weighs two tons, was commissioned by local resident Bill Hayes, who wanted it to be realistic and have a gentle smile. Bill named it "Poki" and displayed it on his property. When Bill moved to Montana in late 2013, he gave the tortoise to the town.'

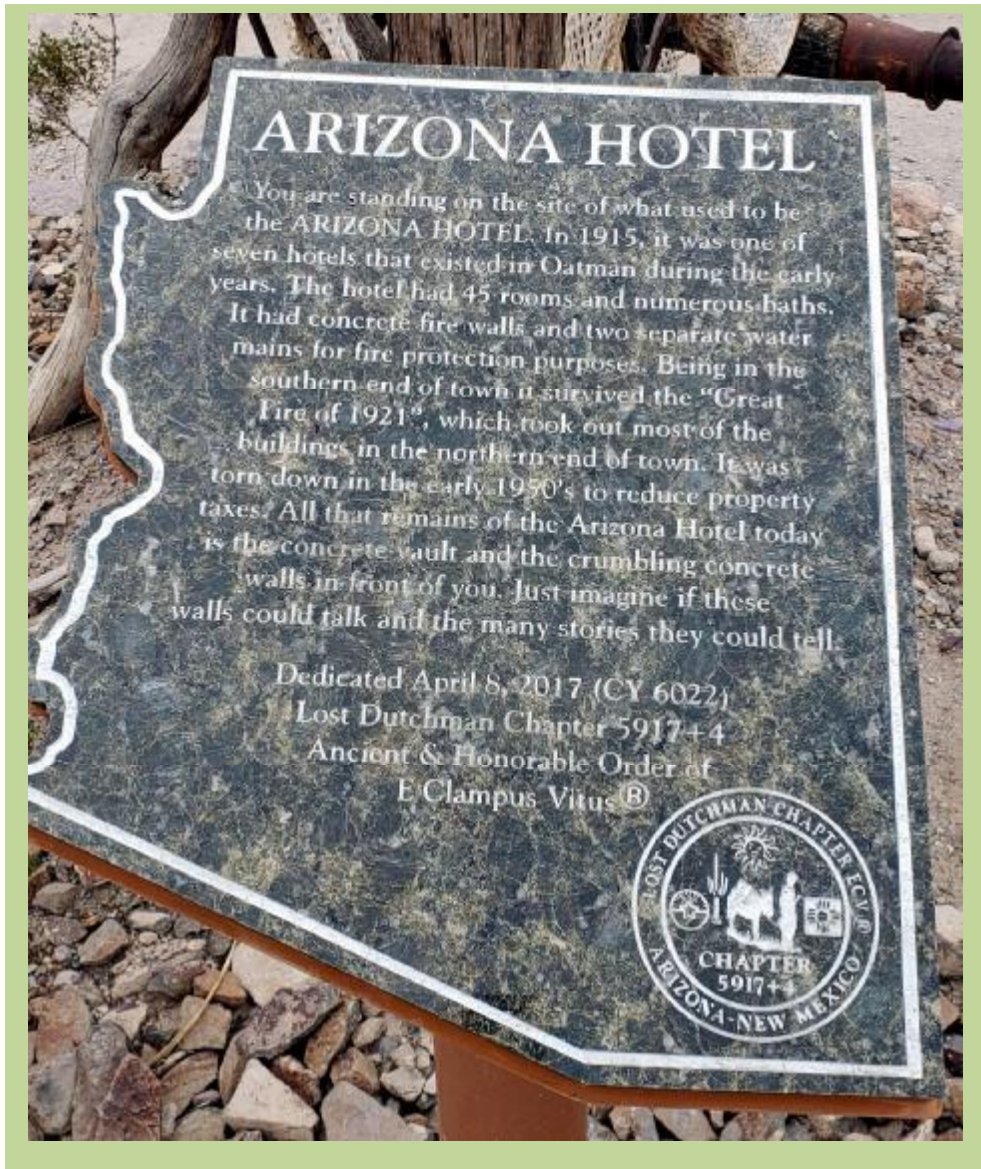
Back on Route 66 again. Oddly enough I am now headed east on the Mother Road this time with plans to stop in Oatman



Basically, Oatman was founded in 1902 when gold was found 'in them thar hills', the Black Mountains. The burros that were used to haul supplies to the gold camps were turned loose once the miners left and their descendants still roam the town and the hillsides. These are not tame animals and will bite and kick if provoked. There are no garbage cans in town because the burros would eat whatever they could find in them.

The town was named in honor of Olive Oatman: a girl from a pioneer family. In 1851, when she was 14 years old, her parents were killed and she was captured by Indians. Later, she was traded to the Mohave tribe and had their traditional tattoo made on her chin. In about five years she was released and reunited with her brother, the only other survivor.







The remaining walls of the hotel



Here's one just leaving the covered sidewalk





Right is the honeymoon suite of Clark Gable and Carol Lombard





Those are all \$1 dollar bills wallpapering the entire first floor of the hotel. I took a guess at \$10,000. When I asked for an estimate I was told between \$150,000 and \$200,000 attached to the walls. Amazing!



Momma and her baby



Wouldn't you know it, 2 days too late! And I had a bed to enter in that race. I know it was a sure winner. It has 6 wheels and a diesel engine



Main Street, Oatman, AZ



As I left Oatman I continued east on Route 66. This section of the mother road is what John Steinbeck must have been describing in *THE GRAPES OF WRATH*. Stories from the depression, when dust bowl farmers were moving everything they had west to find work in California, state that some families would hire a local driver for this section of the road due to the very narrow, two-lane blacktop with no shoulders, crazy switchbacks and steep drop-offs plunging thousands of feet down. Sounds like my kind of road. Actually, that's a description of the road today. Back in the 30's it was dirt and gravel and probably much more narrow. Very scary in an overloaded jalopy with bald tires.

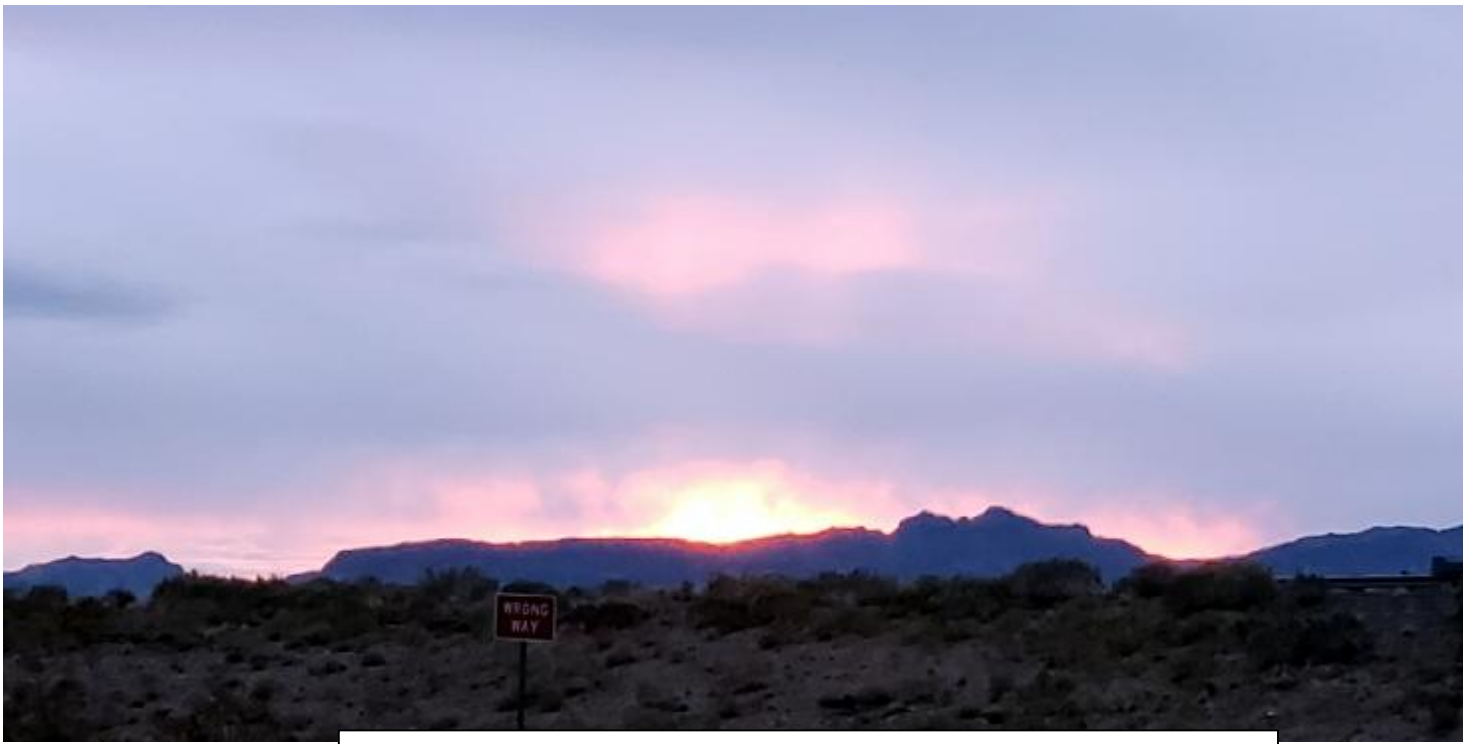
I saw no traffic coming towards me and only one car behind me, so I rode the center line and used the oncoming lane on the lefty hairpin turns. It was no problem at all. Only thing I missed was the scenery since I had to keep my eyes on the road.



I stopped at this turnout for a last glimpse of the sun over the mountains. I didn't really want to wait for sunset and tackle the road described above in the dark. While admiring the view I noticed many grave markers both below me on the hillside and behind me above the path. My research found that it's not really a graveyard, the grave markers are memorials to deceased people whose cremains are scattered at the site. Sitgreaves Pass remains a popular stopping point because one can see the states of Arizona, California, and Nevada from there.



Just around the bend from the graveyard pullout is Sitgreaves Pass. As a lieutenant in the Topographical Engineers, in 1851 Lorenzo Sitgreaves led an exploring expedition over the 35th Parallel Route from Zuni, New Mexico, to the Colorado River at Yuma. The pass is named after the lieutenant.



HOLY SMOKE!!! The mountains are on fire!!! At least that was the thought that went through my mind when I took this photo, which just does NOT do justice the actual view

It was a pretty good day. There are some sights I do miss, just because the RV is not the easiest vehicle to stop and turn around or find a parking space for. But that's the way it goes. Nobody's perfect, especially me.

After reaching the end of 'The Oatman Road', Route 66 headed north back into Kingman. I turned south, with the wind at my back, towards Yucca. I stopped at a Pilot station between Franconia and Powell for the night. I almost forgot to mention that this was the first time I have worn short pants on this trip. Northern Arizona can be chilly this time of year, the Grand Canyon gets snow and there was snow on the mountain peaks around Las Vegas. But today was in the 70's, tomorrow is supposed to be the same. Oops, again my apologies to those back home. My fingers get ahead of my thoughts and I forget how cold it is back there. Wish you all were here. Keep warm.

Until the next one.....