



In Search of Eldorado



Today's destination

Day 5
Wednesday
January 9th

Boulder City, Nevada
and
Hoover Dam

Weather
Great today. 60's and sunny

Hello to Family & Friends

You probably already have a couple questions, like: You left on the 4th, how come no newsletter for 6 days? Or, What the heck is that title supposed to mean?

I will answer the second question first. Eldorado is the poem to the right by Edgar Allen Poe. It also happens to be the name of a John Wayne western, and you all know how big a fan I am of John Wayne. James Caan recites passages from this poem throughout the movie.

Meanings of the poem are varied including the possible suggestion that "Eldorado (or riches in general) does not exist in the living world, or may be extremely difficult to find in the physical realm. Eldorado can also be interpreted not as the worldly, yellowish metal, but as treasures that actually have the possibility of existence in the abode of spirits. These "spiritual" treasures are that of the mind: knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.

"Eldorado" was one of Poe's last poems. Like the subject of the poem, Poe was on a quest for success or happiness and, despite spending his life searching for it, he eventually loses his strength and faces death." Thanks Wikipedia, for that definition.

I prefer to define it as my personal quest for knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and the beauty of the natural world. Along with a few oddball sights that I may run across (eventually the largest ball of twine, etc.)

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!'

As for the first question: I left about 8 p.m. Friday night, January 4th. I stopped about 100 miles north of St. Louis the first night, then in Shamrock, Texas on Saturday night. It was a little strange on this trip, I was basically following the same Route 66 as my trip a couple years ago, but this time I was on the interstate and just recognized the names of the towns as I passed their exits at 65 MPH. Oddly enough I spent a night on that trip in Shamrock, Texas also. I thought it was a fitting end to the day.

On Sunday, just short of Albuquerque, NM, I stopped to visit Steve & Marcie Shaw who run the Great American Adventures horseback rides I frequently partake in. Hi Steve & Marcie, thanks for your hospitality.

I made Gallup, NM Sunday night, 22 degree overnight low. It was 50 in Merton.

My next planned stop was to visit my cousin Al, his wife Deb and his mom, my Aunt Joan, in Henderson, Nevada.

Somewhere between Gallup and Henderson I stopped to fill the water tank on the RV. At my next stop I noticed water running out from under the water heater. Ohh ohh!! Fortunately, there is a Camping World in Henderson.

I stopped at the Henderson Camping World to find out about the damage. They don't do warranty work, only extended warranty work. I really wonder about this company. So I spent Monday evening visiting with Al and Aunt Joan, then parked in a casino lot overnight just down the street from the Las Vegas Camping World. By noon Tuesday it had been determined that the water heater had suffered freeze damage. I will be here for a week at least.

I know what you're saying "get to the pictures already will ya!!" Ok I will. Wednesday I decided to at least visit the nearby sites on my list while I wait for warranty confirmation of the repair and the part to arrive. Below is Boulder City, Nevada and Hoover Dam. My first visit to Boulder City, but my second to Hoover Dam, as a little kid back in the mid-sixties on one of our family trips to California. I do remember taking the tour of the Dam, so I did not bother this time.



First stop – Boulder City, Nevada. They have several murals and sculptures downtown with a map, and an audio tour can also be taken. When you think of a town or city having several murals they want the tourists to notice they would most likely have something to do with the history of the town. Unfortunately, that is not the case in Boulder City. I only include photos of two murals, and the one below is more of a sculpture since it is in 3D. I thought they were both well done. The one below is about 30' long. I did not see any longhorn sheep, but they are supposed to be plentiful in the area.



As mentioned above, I thought the sculptures would also have a bearing on the history of Boulder City, but only a couple of them did. Don't worry, I am not including photos of 30 sculptures for your yawning enjoyment, just a few I found pertinent to the subject or of interest to me. In other words, I thought they were cool.

I felt the one to the right was particularly fitting for my friends.



At the height of Hoover Dam construction, more than 7,000 men labored in Black Canyon. Some jobs were glamorous and exciting, such as the high scalers who swung over the canyon on ropes or the cableway operators who kept concrete buckets moving 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Other jobs were more mundane, but no less important: there were muckers who shoveled mud out of the tunnels, truck drivers who hauled rock up and down the river or, like the man you see here, those who swept the outhouses and kept them well supplied with paper.

"Alabam"
by Steven Liguori,
Artist



This one is for Kali! Not exactly a sculpture, but it was at one of the many antiques stores in downtown.

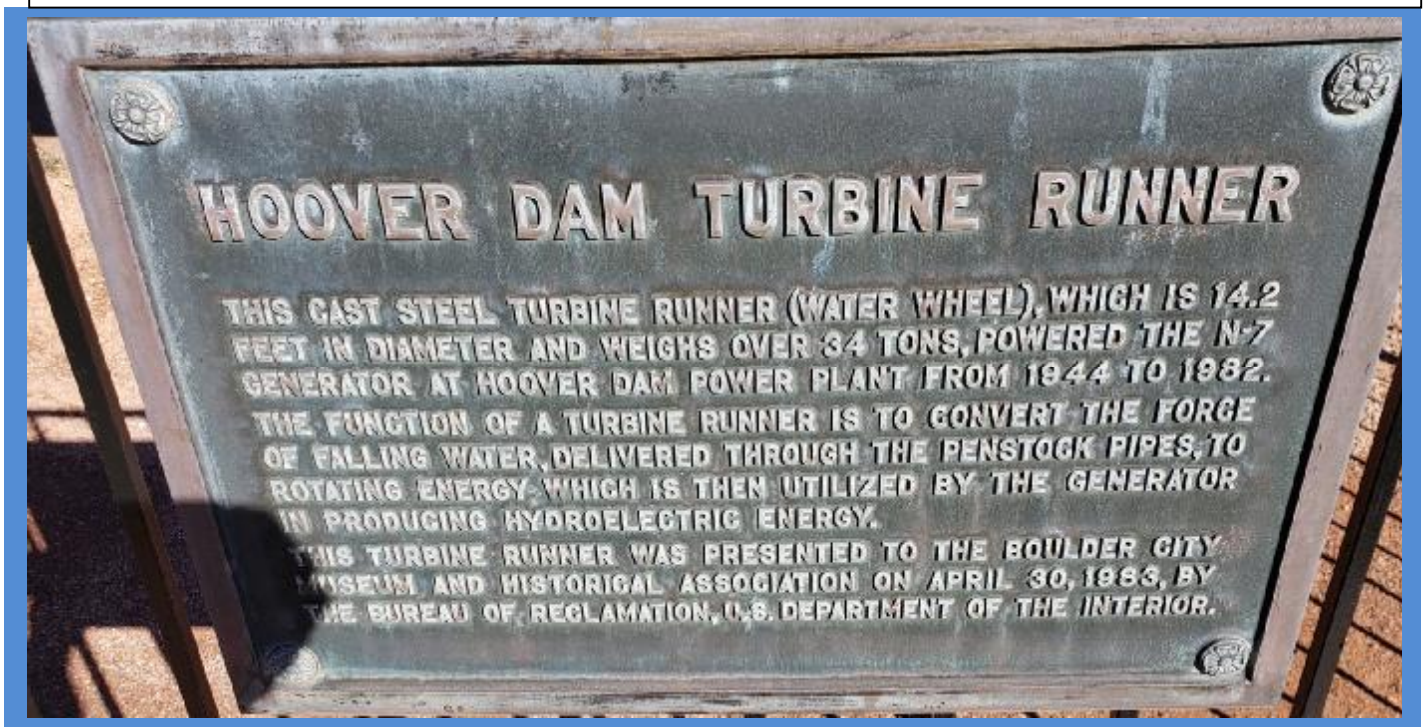
At first, as I approached from the rear, I thought the truck below might be a replica of the Beverly Hillbillies truck. Those of you under 50 will probably have to look that one up.



You might not be able to read the plaque. This is "Babe the Pig". Most of us have read this story to our kids or had it read to us.



Below is not a sculpture, but I thought it was interesting. It was also strange to see green grass, not only because it's January, but because everything here is brown and gray.





Actually, before I walked around downtown I went to the Boulder Dam Hotel. They have a long history, celebrities have stayed here, and there is a Boulder City/Hoover Dam museum in the back. The museum was excellent. I could have included a lot of photos, but there are only so many MB's that emails will accept, and I knew Hoover Dam was yet to come.

My next stop is the sign below.



If you didn't already know it, I am somewhat of a train buff, especially model trains. On one of my future trips I hope to just travel from historic train ride to historic train ride. Maybe even get to operate a steam engine in Nevada. But that is for the future.



A little hard to see with all the shadows



That's better. This one was out in the sun.

It's hard to tell in the pic, but that wheel behind me is shoulder height.

Being January there was not much activity here. The full size train car with a model layout within was closed; I had to wait 30 minutes for them to find the guy with the key to open the gate; and the miniature train that runs on the layout below was not operating. The large train runs on the weekends so I might go back. Maybe the model train car will be open also.





Below is a Post Office Railway car. Up until WWII mail used to be picked up from small towns and sorted in the car while underway.



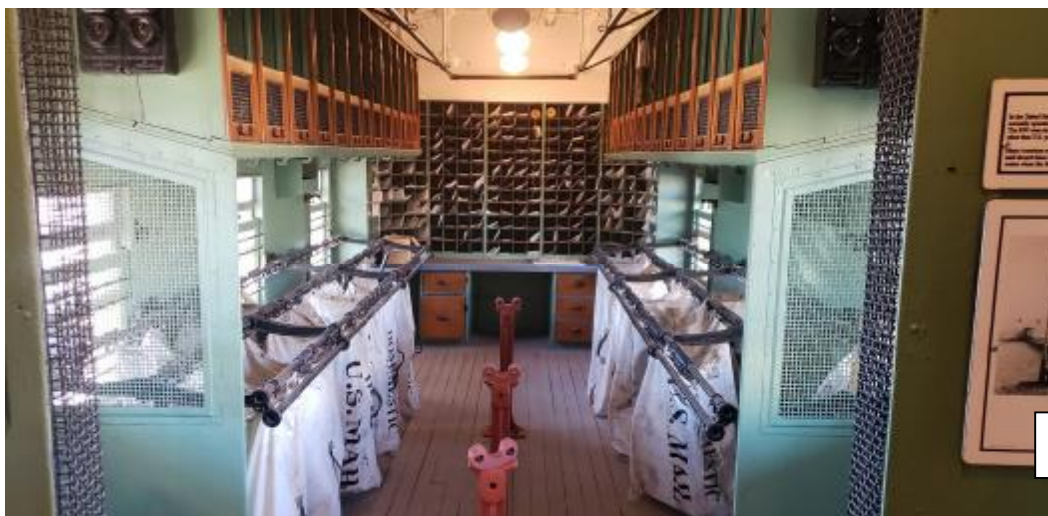
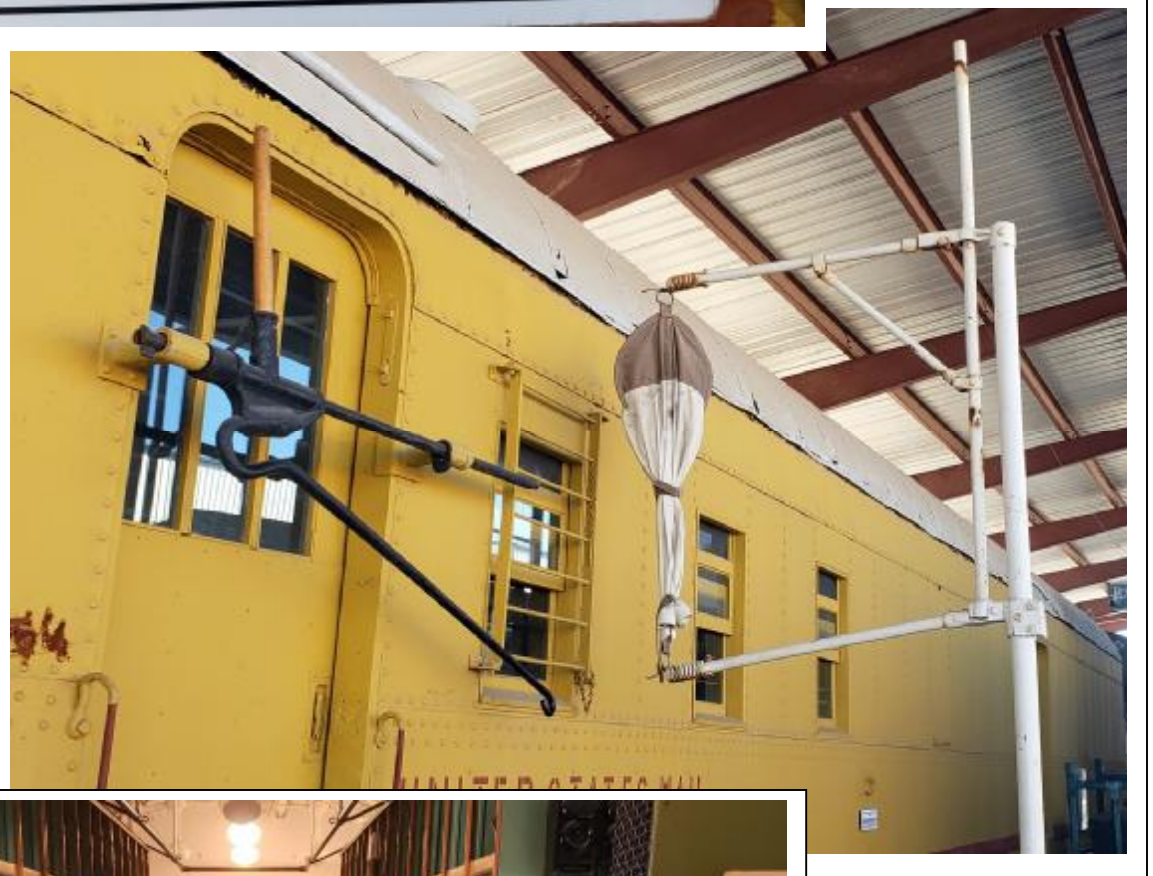
MAIL ON - THE - FLY



Mail Crane

Railway Mail Service revolutionized the way mail was processed by sorting mail aboard moving trains, which were attached to regularly scheduled passenger trains. A critical component of the service was the mail exchange made between moving trains and small towns where the passenger trains didn't stop. This tricky and potentially dangerous component, known as "mail on-the-fly," allowed mail to be exchanged between Railway Post Office (RPO) cars and these small towns.

Railway Post Office cars used a system of mail cranes and catchers to retrieve mail at stations without stopping. As the train approached a station, a clerk prepared the catcher arm, which would then snatch the incoming mailbag in the blink of an eye. The clerk then booted out the outgoing mailbag. Experienced clerks spoke with pride of making the switch at night with nothing but the curves and feel of the track to warn them of an upcoming catch.



The interior



LIFE ON A CABOOSE

The caboose is considered to be the original house trailer and was a trainman's home away from home. It included the trainman's living room, his office, workshop, kitchen, dining room, bedroom, den, toilet, balcony and observation tower. It was his source of income, personal prestige and means of travel.

The caboose served as the operating headquarters and office of a freight train. At the table/desk in the caboose, the conductor spent as much as half of his time on paperwork. Much of the paperwork included handling the waybills and the wheel report which listed in detail the cars within his train with the owners' initials, numbers, contents and weight.

One or two trainmen (aka brakemen) also rode in the caboose, taking care of various duties that included switching, flagging and watching the train for hit boxes. A brakeman on the rear platform would signal a passing train that all was in order and the brakeman in the cupola kept a sharp lookout to spot any trouble that might show up on the train ahead. He also watched for signals from the head-end brakeman or the engine crew, and they would communicate with each other by hand or engine whistle signals. On board, the trainmen kept their food in lockers or an ice box. The food could be cooked on the pot-bellied stove to furnish amply prepared meals or a hot cup of coffee.



The caboose was a daily adventure that took a trainman far from his home town and was a window to the world. Naturally, the trainmen became attached to their caboose as they spent much of their time there. It was the caboose that provided them shelter from cold winter storms and hot summer heat. To the tune of clinking wheels over the jointed rails, trainmen worked, argued, cooked and ate their meals, played, relaxed and slept.

Even though cabooses are no longer used at the end of freight trains, they once served a vital role in freight shipments and just about every freight train within our continent had a caboose behind it at one time. Routinely, cabooses that outlived their usefulness on the railroad were scrapped. However, a number of them became museum pieces. Others were sold or donated to individuals and businesses, non-profit groups or city and towns for a wide variety of uses.





Unless you're heartless you will find this interesting

OWNEY THE POSTAL DOG



On July 27, 2011, the National Postal Museum commemorated a scruffy mutt named Owey with his appearance on a United States postage stamp. During his lifetime, Owey was the nation's most famous canine. From 1888 until his death in 1897, Owey rode with Railway Mail Service clerks and mailbags all across the nation.

His owner was probably a postal clerk in the Albany, New York, post office who let the dog walk with him to work. Owey was attracted to the scent of the mailbags and, when his master moved away, Owey stayed with his new mail clerk friends. He soon began to follow mailbags onto mail wagons and then onto mail trains. Owey's journeys took him across the United States and into Canada.



Railway mail clerks considered the dog a good luck charm. At a time when train wrecks were all too common, no train Owey ever rode was in a wreck. The Railway mail clerks adopted Owey as their unofficial mascot, marking his travels by placing medals and tags on his collar. Before long the poor dog was carrying so many tags on his collar that he could barely keep his head upright. Postmaster General John Wanamaker had a special harness built for Owey to wear, so his tags could be spread out evenly all over his body. A writer for the Brooklyn Daily Eagle reported that, when Owey jogged, his tags jingled "like the bells on a junk wagon." During his lifetime, he acquired 1,017 medals and tokens.

By the spring of 1897, Owey was in poor health. He had been "retired" from traveling and was living with a postal worker in St. Louis, Missouri. But the dog and the trains could not be separated and by June he was again riding the rails. Unfortunately, later that same month, he had to be put down. The postal clerks refused to bury their beloved mascot. Clerks across the country asked that the dog receive the honor they considered he was due by being preserved and presented to the Post Office Department's headquarters. Owey was kept on display by the Department, and then forwarded to the Smithsonian Institution in 1911.



The zig zag path to the bridge overlook





Through the windshield as I approached the Dam.

Security checkpoint up the road had me open the outside storage compartments and another agent searched the interior before being allowed to drive over the Dam



The intake towers in Lake Mead, Hoover Dam, and the memorial bridge upper left.



From top to bottom, 726 feet tall



The sun was definitely NOT in the right spot for photos when I visited.



This is one of the original spillways they used to divert the Colorado River around the building site for 4 years back in the 30's.

The river has not been high enough to utilize this spillway since 1983.

It's hard to gauge the size of this tunnel. The railing around it is 4' high for comparison.



Discover Hoover Dam

An Engineering Marvel, An Historic Milestone

The Bureau of Reclamation welcomes you to Hoover Dam, one of the exceptional engineering achievements of the 20th Century.

Hoover Dam and Lake Mead have provided a reliable supply of water and affordable electricity to the people of the Southwest since the 1930s. The growth of great American cities like Los Angeles would not have been possible without the dam. Nor would the irrigated farmlands of the region – which supply 80% of America's winter fruits and vegetables – have been able to produce such bounty.

We hope you enjoy your visit to one of America's truly special places.

While You Are Here . . .

A walking tour of Hoover Dam will give you the opportunity to see everything from mind-boggling engineering feats to mysterious star charts, historic monuments, wildlife, and more.



Winged Figures of the Republics



Historical information graphics



Desert Bighorn Sheep



High Steeper Climb



Tidal Campers

See How It Works

To buy a Hoover Dam tour ticket, walk across the dam and follow the "I-Beam" signs. Your ticket includes a tour of the inner workings of the dam. You can also explore exhibits, galleries and enjoy dramatic views from the Observation Deck.



Weapons, including small pocket knives, are strictly forbidden in the Visitor Center. Personal items bigger than 9x12.25x12.5 (30x30x30 cm) are not permitted. Lockers are not available.



DID YOU KNOW?

Hoover Dam generates about 4.5 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity annually. That is enough to power the power requirements of more than 60,000 typical American households.



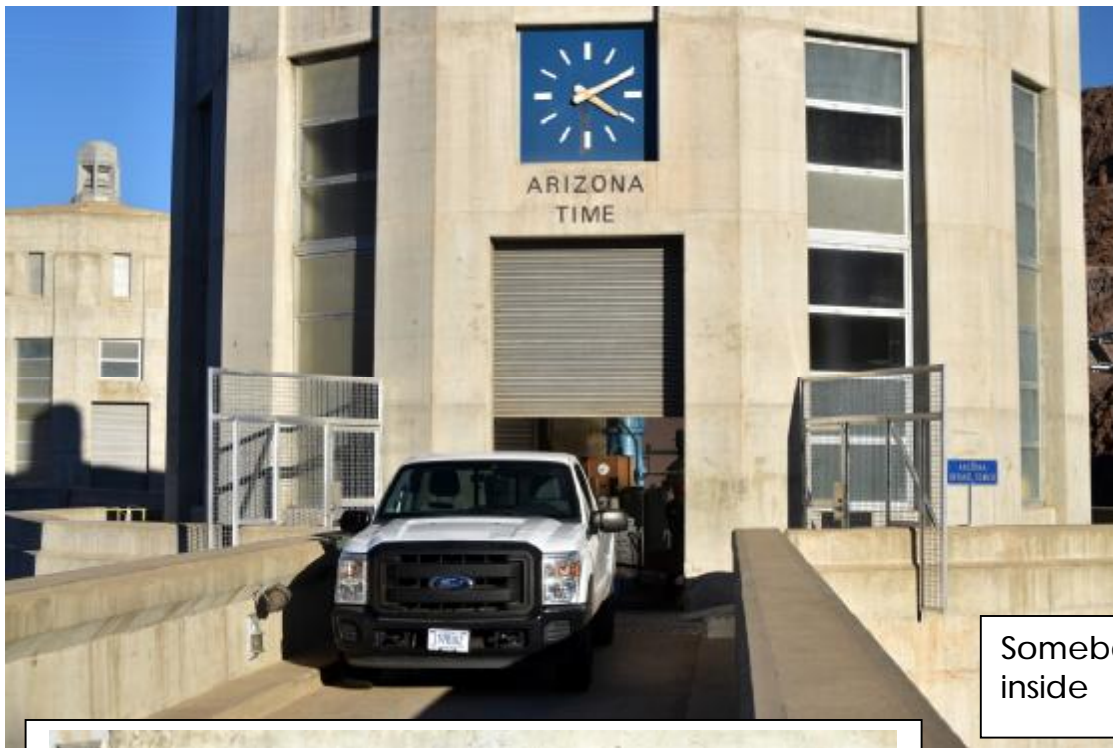
LEGEND
 - pedestrian walk
 - parking & bike rack
 - restrooms
 - viewing opportunities
 - food/beverage
 - drinking water

Be Cool, Be Safe!

Dozens of workers died from heat-related causes during the construction of Hoover Dam. Don't be a statistic! Drink plenty of water, wear a hat, and apply sunscreen. Call 911 in an emergency.



Just a closer shot of the intake towers. Note the pickup truck on the bridge to the first tower.



Somebody was working inside



Same view from a higher parking lot.

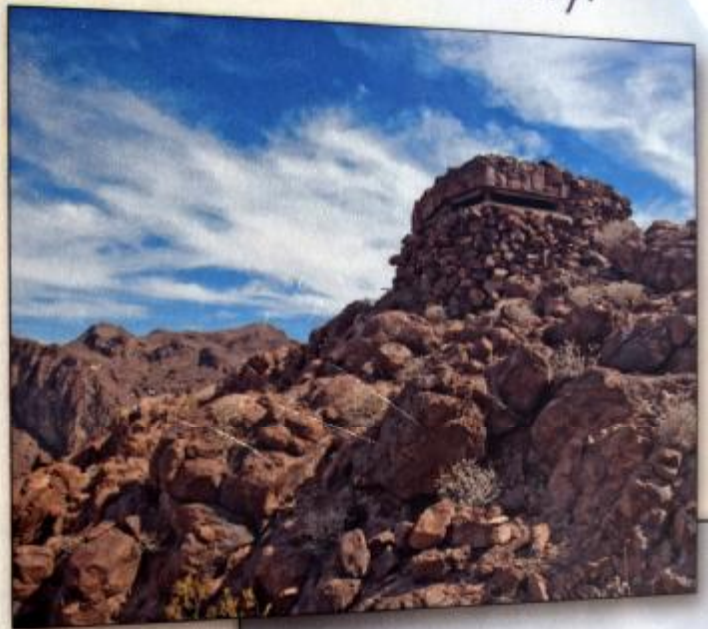
High on a Lonely Hill

The onset of World War II led to tightened security.

...ered critical to the
...ectricity it generated
...ke Mead.

...ow significant the
1939, a plot to bomb
...n agents living in
...and prevented. A few
...arred during the war,
...iously threatened.

The pillbox on the hill above you was one
of four camouflaged fortifications that
were armed with machine guns and
manned around the clock.





That was it for the first REAL day. Tomorrow is an oil change on the RV. 10,000 miles already. Not sure when the next newsletter will be sent out. Just hanging around Las Vegas with nothing to do (ha ha). Don't worry girls, I have no desire to gamble, so the house and RV are safe. But I may take some time just to go walk through all the casinos. Come to think of it I could make a newsletter from that. It has been about 14+ years since I've been here so I'm sure there have been lots of changes.

Until the next one.....