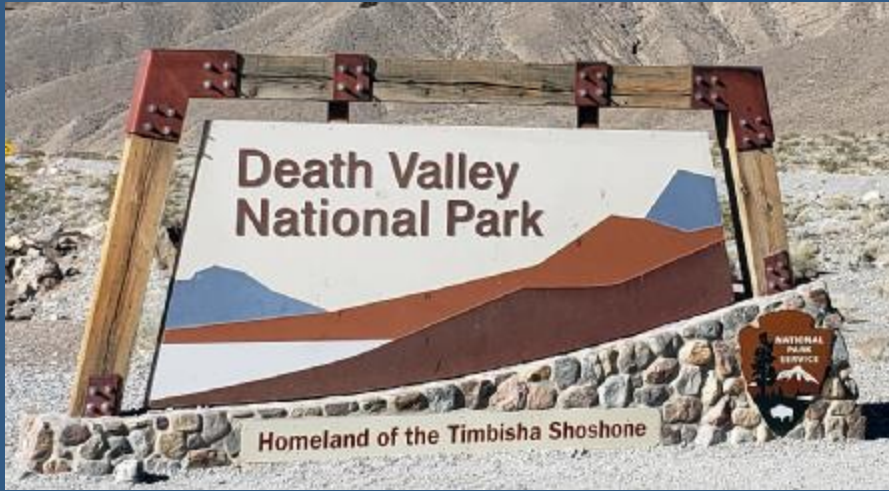




In Search of Eldorado

Link to the Eldorado Song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VczD1olutQ8>



Hello to Family & Friends

I spent last evening over at Al & Deb's, discussing how to make everything right in the world, did my laundry and said my goodbyes around 10:30 p.m.

I made final preparations, diesel, water, DEF, charged all of the chargers, and headed west. Pahrump (emphasis on the first syllable) is only about 75 minutes over the Spring Mountains. There are several casinos there where I can camp for the night.

I imagine it would have been a scenic drive in the daylight, but I saw only 3-4 cars besides myself the whole trip. Surprisingly, I was the only camper in the casino lot.

Below is sunrise on the mountains bordering the south of Pahrump.



Day 7

Thursday,
January 9th

*On the Road to Death
Valley*

Weather
40's to 70's and sunny

In Search of Eldorado

By Edgar Allan 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.

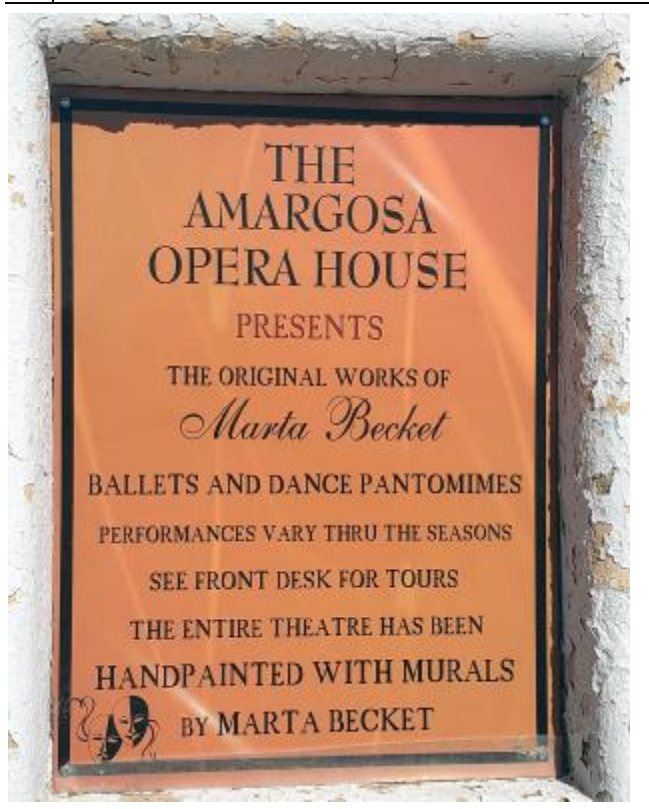
And, as his strength
Failed him at length,
He met a pilgrim shadow—
'Shadow,' said he,
'Where can it be—
This land of Eldorado?'

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

I made a quick stop in Pahrump to fill up the tank since Nevada is only \$2.96/gal. At the time I had no idea what the cost of diesel is in California, but I knew it would be higher. Since I have now arrived I can pass on that diesel here in Death Valley is \$5.67/gal. Whew!



First on my itinerary is the Amargosa Opera House in Death Valley Junction. I had read that if you toss the manager five bucks you can get a tour. Not quite how it works. The cost is correct, a five spot, but the tours are given only every two hours. I would have had to sit around for an hour before a tour started, so I just walked around, took some photos and hit the road again.



Supposedly, the murals in the opera house are something to see. But, while I was in the hotel, I found several murals on the walls of the dining room. I think those will do as fairly good substitutes for the real thing. I can only assume they are by the same artist.



I was surprised at the size of this building. Shaped in a U, the opera house anchors the right side, I'm not sure what anchors the left side, but the 20 room hotel runs the whole middle length of the U.



The opera house is in the far left. You can see the RV parked in front of the hotel. The RV is 25' long. I think the hotel portion must be over 300' long.



I think this sign, as well as Death Valley Junction itself, has seen better days.



Adding another National park to my list.

For quite some time I have anticipated seeing the view from 'Dante's View'. I have researched it and wanted to do something special from there. Imagine my disappointment when, after driving six miles, I found the gates closed.

AAAAARRRRGGGGHHHHHH

I was even more upset that there was no posting that the road was closed ahead. Why make everyone drive an extra 12 miles for nothing. As I arrived back at the beginning of the road, I did see a small sign aligned with 'Dante's View' saying that it was closed. All I can say is, the five cars I passed on my way back to the intersection made me feel not quite so dumb.



This was from the RV. Once again, the colors seen with the naked eye just don't show up on 'film'.



YEEE HAAW!!

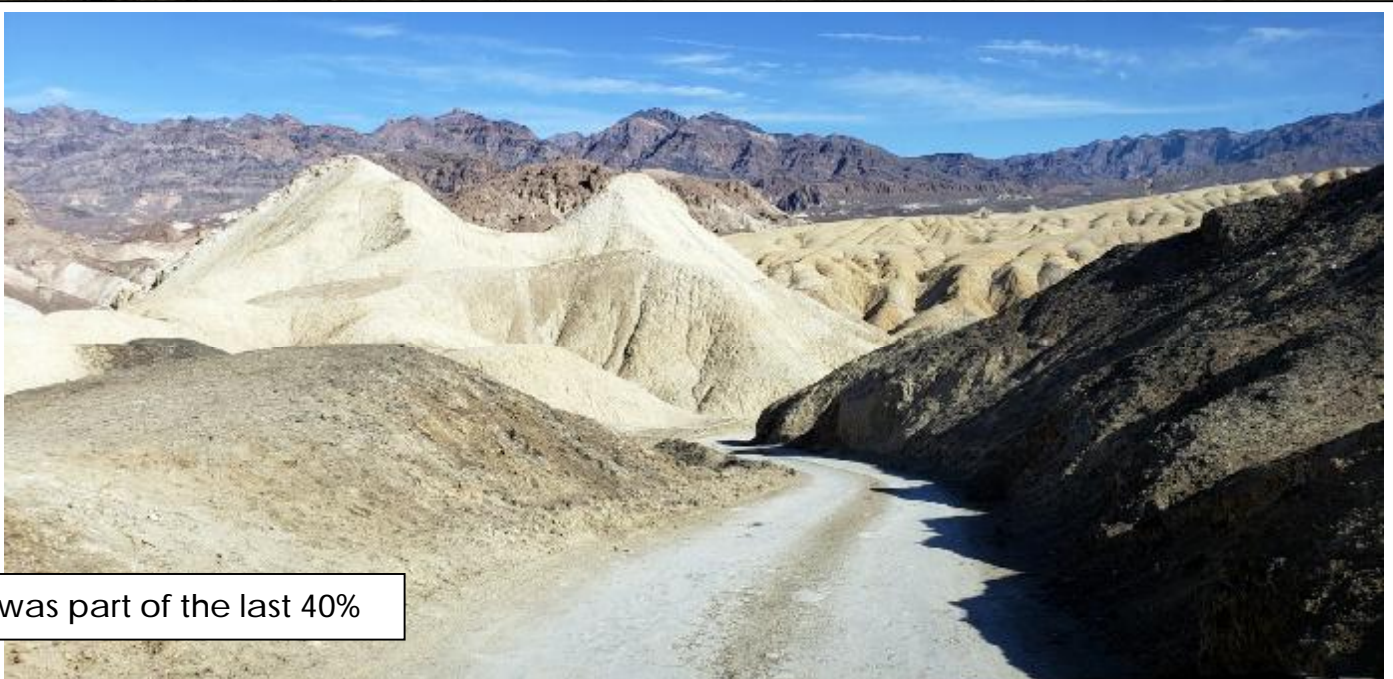
I will admit, the description did say no vehicles over 25'. This was an experience. The first 60% was relatively tame, but the last 40%? I actually thought, twice, that I was going to tip over sideways.



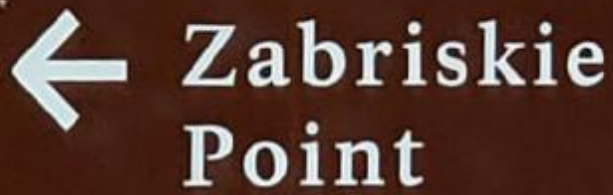
This is from the same portion. It's a panoramic, but what baffles me is that my shadow holding up the phone in the lower left, was on the right when I took the picture. Strange.



The road ahead



This was part of the last 40%



← Zabriskie
Point

Does anyone else think he looks a little like
Teddy Roosevelt?



Christian B. Zabriskie (1864-1936)
was vice president and general
manager of the Pacific Coast Borax
Company. He oversaw the operations
in Death Valley during the transition
from mining to tourism.



Almost to the top of that peak you can see a little black stick straight up and down, that is a real live person. If you go straight up from the word 'top' in the sentence above, you can see a lighter cut through the lower part of the hill. That's the trailhead that I followed, The Badlands Loop Trail. Keep that in mind for future photos.



Starkly beautiful.
I love badlands.



The shots above are all from Zabriskie Point Overview. There are several hikes from this trailhead. My choice is the Badlands Loop Trail, following the wash, left most arrow. Just where it bends farthest to the right, middle arrow, is the trail back to the trailhead in the photo just under Mr. Zabriskie's picture. The right arrow points to the Golden Canyon Trail. Keep those in mind also.



Right about now you may be thinking, there is something strangely familiar about the scenery. If you're a STAR WARS fan, especially the original three movies, I can understand why. Many scenes were filmed here in Death Valley.

This is the loop trail. But I'm finding no loop and I'm getting bored. So I decided to make my own trail and followed one of the larger tributaries to the main trail. It ended with the photo below. Much more fun.



I just figured it out. The photo above is the panoramic with my shadow on the right, not the previous one. (Just think, I could have not said anything and nobody would have ever known)

Whatever.

I continued down the loop trail and as I usually am, became amazed at the power of Mother Earth and Father Time to bend and fold solid rock in any way, shape or form they so desire. The rock layers below are almost at a 90 degree angle to the ground.



Once again I became bored that the loop trail was not looping, so I started back. Along the way I noticed another large tributary which I decided to try. This one was even better than the last.



Climbing out of the wash to the top of the ridge I was rewarded with this view. Right in the center on top of the hill is the Zabriskie Point overlook.



And who'd a thunk it? I ended up on the Golden Canyon Trail. Just around the bend ahead is the same trail as the right hand arrow seen earlier.



Pardon my windshield glare. Mountains to the right, mountains to the left, and the central portion of Death Valley in the middle.



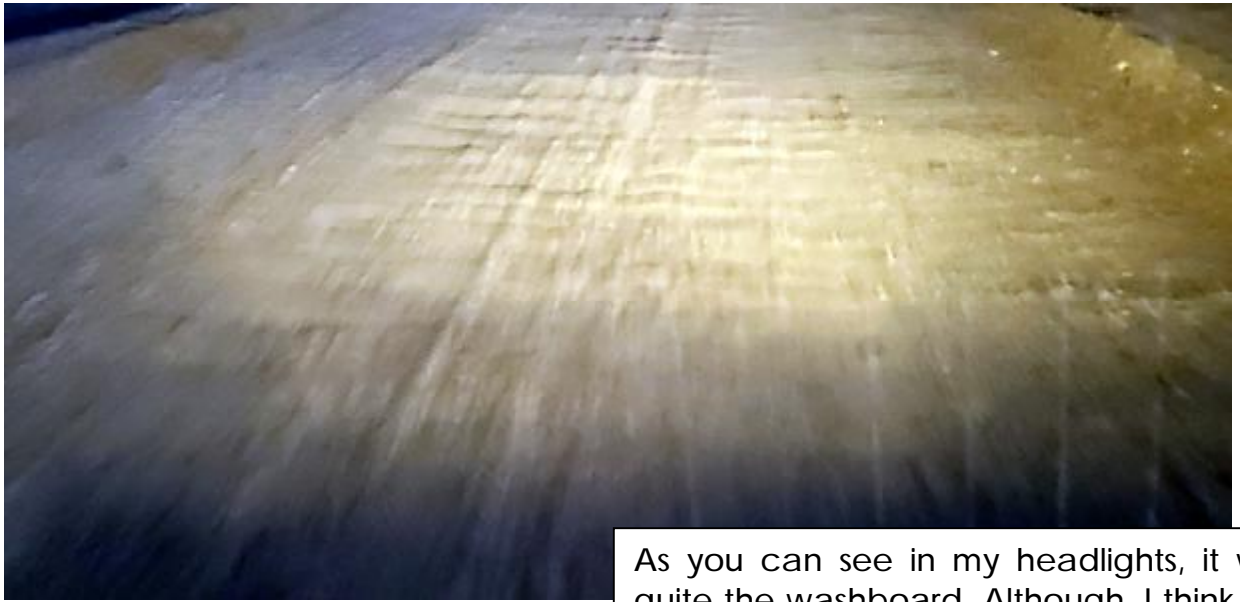


I spent quite awhile in the Visitor Center. I had questions; they had answers; I had more questions; they had displays; a couple more questions; they had a movie.

The moon rising over the mountains.

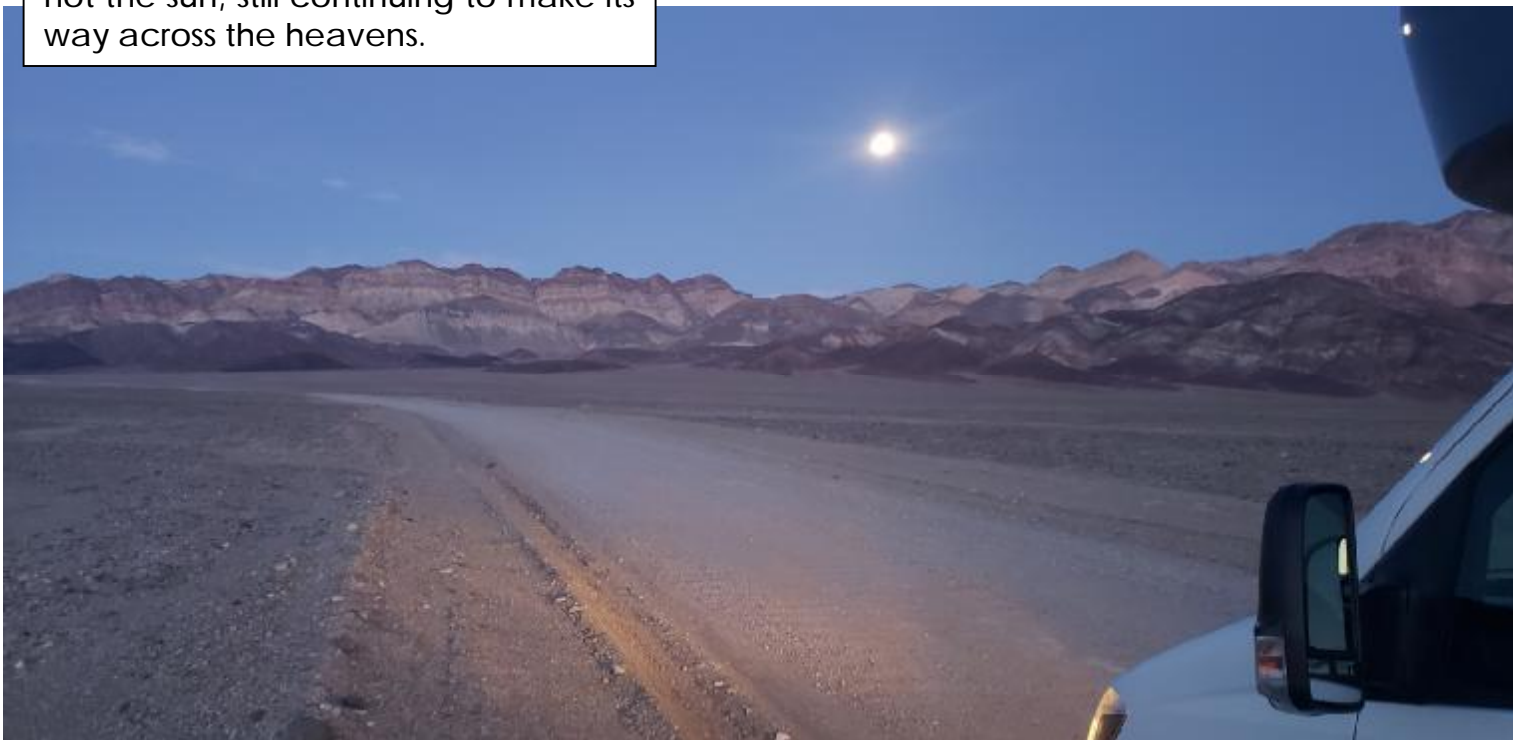


One of my questions was free camping off the grid. Answer (which Kali also supplied): down any dirt road at least 1 mile from the paved road. My choice for tonight was the West Side Road, which runs, ironically, along the west side of the Badwater Basin.



As you can see in my headlights, it was quite the washboard. Although, I think the one Morgan and I drove in Big Bend National Park, and the scenic drive in Pipe Organ Cactus National Park, were both worse than this one. I was really glad when the odometer hit one mile.

Nothing fancy at my campsite choice, but the view in the morning should be worth it. That is a full moon, not the sun, still continuing to make its way across the heavens.



With the mountains in play, the sun sets early and I would rather chance these back roads while there is still some daylight as opposed to full dark. Although, the full moon is casting so much light I can still see the mountains at 10 p.m. The down side is the full moon means very little star activity to be seen. And this is one of the best places in North America to see the Milky Way. Can't plan for every contingency.

Even though today is the 9th, you will probably not receive this newsletter until the 12th or 13th. Unless I stop somewhere that has WIFI. So you might get 3 or 4 on the same day.

I have no cell coverage here, at least to send, even a text. However, I did receive a text while sitting here. So why I can receive but not send is a mystery to me.

I am planning on 3 or 4 days here in Death Valley. It is the largest National Park outside of Alaska. The picture showing the mountains right, mountains left, valley middle? The middle valley goes another 90 miles north and 70 miles south. The mountains to the left? There is another valley on the other side of those mountains, then more mountains, before the western end of the park.

Just a few facts: Badwater Basin is the lowest point in North America, 282' below sea level. Telescope peak, which borders Badwater Basin on the west, is 11,049' high, with snow on the peak. Quite the contrast.

I did ask the Ranger a question she had never been asked before (get your minds out of the gutter people). The reason Dante's View is closed is because ice and snow have made the road dangerous for travel. There was a sign saying the last ¼ mile was a 15% grade. My question was, can I park at the gates, there is a trailer drop off area, and take my bike to where the road becomes snow covered, then hike the rest of the way? For the most part it was a shrug of the shoulders. I will leave it for the last day. It is supposed to be in the 60's and 70's the entire time I'm visiting, so keep your fingers crossed.

Strange weather here. I have been typing this newsletter for about 3 hours. It was dead calm when I arrived. After awhile the wind picked up considerably and I was rockin'. Then it was calm again. The last ten or fifteen minutes have been even windier. It will be fun sleeping here.

One last item. You may have noticed at the start I noted it was day 7. I left last Friday. Arrived Vegas late Sunday. Only took pictures on one day with Al. So even though I have been on the road 7 days, this is only the third newsletter. Please don't send me emails asking if I forgot to send one to you (with no reception I won't know for 3 days anyways).

Until next time.....