



In Search of Eldorado



Today's destination

Day 28

Friday

February 1st

In and around Yuma

Weather

Great today. 70's and sunny

Hello to Family & Friends

I was a little sore this morning when I got up. My wrist felt better but was still aching. I put Flexall 454 on my thigh and anti-bacterial on all the rest and decided I better have my hand and wrist checked to make sure there were no breaks.

I first searched for free walk-in clinics and found two in Yuma. They were both about the same distance so I headed towards the nearer one. I found the building and the suite #, but the door was locked and it said something about being a teaching facility. Well, the next suite was open and they were very helpful. They were not even aware of a free clinic there and called the number which was a different business. I tried the second number and that was disconnected. I thought you could believe everything you read on the internet. JK They gave me directions to the clinic pictured above.

I gave them my insurance card, filled out the paperwork and sat down to wait. There were only 4 or 5 other people there. A short time later I was called up to the desk and told that it would be \$242 for the office call and then whatever they did inside. Actually, she said "it will 242." I gave her a quizzical look and said "2:42 P.M.?" "No, \$242 for the office call..." and so on. I chuckled, shook my head, and told her ok. After playing SuDoKu for about an hour I decided, the heck with it. It doesn't feel too bad and I could not justify paying over \$250 for the opinion of a PA, most likely. I told her I was leaving "but you're next" she says. It's not that bad I responded.

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!'

By now it was 1 p.m. and I decided to hit the visitor center and then eat lunch while I planned my day. The plan I came up with was to visit the sights I missed in my hurried drive to Yuma yesterday. This would give my leg a rest from hiking or biking for another day. Al. you can now call ME Hopalong.



First stop is the "Bridge to Nowhere"

This is about 5 miles back towards Quartzite. I will spend most of my day along HWY 95.

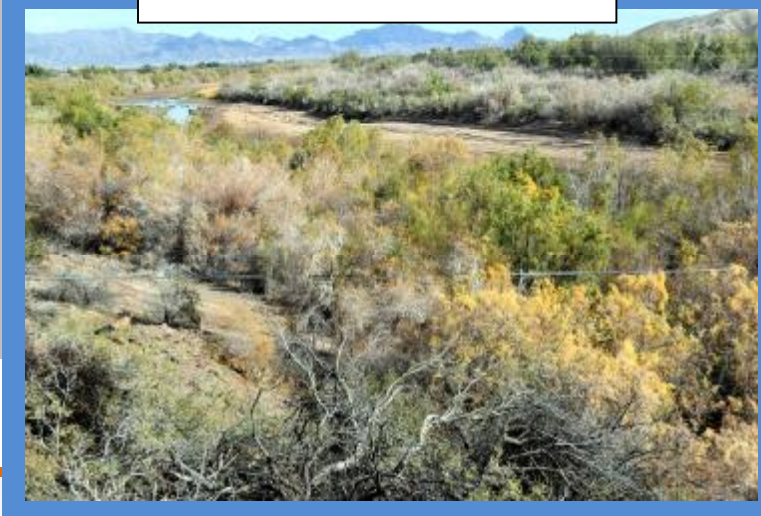


The story goes, per Roadside America, that McPhaul Bridge, named in honor of Henry Harrison McPhaul, an 800-foot-long suspension bridge, was built in 1929 to span the Gila River. But it was considered too flimsy for modern traffic. Apparently the bridge was in use until 1968 when a dam was built upstream and the water diverted. Highway traffic was then rerouted over a much smaller bridge.



As with many a "it can be done cheaper this way", in 1993 a flood destroyed the new bridge while the McPhaul bridge, with its greater height, would probably have been just fine.

These days, the McPhaul Bridge crosses only desert sand and rocks, but the Arizona air has kept it remarkably intact.





As I made my way to the bridge I noticed that the right side of the road was a mass of shooting ranges. While I was walking around the bridge I heard gunfire, although it sounded like something much bigger than a typical gun. Maybe it was just the echo off the mountains. Surprisingly, I could hear the ping of metal targets being hit. So after my “walk to nowhere” I decided to investigate.



This place is huge. It stretches along this road for almost a mile. Cowboy action? Police combat? This sounds pretty interesting. Unfortunately I didn't have the guts to just drive up and start asking questions. After all, I might have been shot.



Next stop is pictured to the left. The military has been conducting testing here since 1942. Vehicles; weapons; engineering; drones; anything and everything military has been tested here. They also use this facility for desert troop training.



GUN: 220 MM-M1
CARRIAGE: M2
TOTAL WEIGHT: 103,720 LBS
PROJECTILE WEIGHT: 204 LBS
MUZZLE VELOCITY: 2,840 FT. PER SEC.
GUN LENGTH: 35 FT.
RANGE: 35,635 YDS.
RATE OF FIRE: 1 ROUND PER 4 MINUTES
 (NORMAL ROUNDS PER MINUTES FOR 30 ROUNDS MAXIMUM!)

Roadside America calls these Atomic Cannons and states they were built to fire an atomic shell during the cold war. I could find no verification of that info. So let's just say they're military cannons.



I thought the plow on the back was rather interesting. I found out later it is used for clearing debris and creating a firing platform.

I was surprised to see a sign that claimed there was a visitor center .8 of a mile up the road. Excellent, let's check it out. And so the worm turns, the visitor center is closed on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Oh well, let's check out all the tanks and stuff they have on display around here. There must be 20 or more tanks, anti-aircraft guns and rockets.



"The MGR-1 Honest John rocket was the first nuclear-capable surface-to-surface rocket in the United States arsenal. Originally designated Artillery Rocket XM31, the first unit was tested on 29 June 1951, with the first production rounds delivered in January 1953. Its designation was changed to M31 in September 1953. The first Army units received their rockets by year's end and Honest John battalions were deployed in Europe in early 1954. Alternatively, the rocket was capable of carrying an ordinary high-explosive warhead weighing 1,500 pounds." Thank you Wikipedia. With the visitor center closed I had no access to info on all of these displays.

M4A3 Sherman Tank (paraphrasing)

This tank was manufactured in April of 1944. 75mm gun; 30 caliber gun; 50 caliber heavy barreled machine gun above the turret and a dozer blade.

This tank saw actual duty in WWII. It is nicknamed "Ol War Horse", and the holes/divots are from enemy fire and have been repaired.





There were over 110 holes in this tank



A little further down the road at the security gate were this tank and the helicopter



I turned around at security and headed back. This was a much more interesting visit than any description I found during my research. I am glad I went back to see it.



As I was heading out I saw this sign. I thought it was interesting that they have an area called the "Middle East". It would have been great to get a tour of the facility.



I bypassed Castle Dome. A ghost town/mining town, probably like Chloride. I am getting tired of dirt and gravel roads and Castle Dome is at the end of 7 miles of 10 MPH. Maybe next time.

From Roadside America:

This diminutive chapel was built in 1995 by farmer Loren Pratt on the edge of his fields along the road, in honor of his deceased wife Lois. It measures 8 ft. x 12 ft. inside. A sign on the dirt road that leads to the church reads: "Stop, Rest, Worship." (they need to update their info)

In September 2011, a freak microburst storm flung it 60 ft., crushing the steeple and losing a wall. The Pratt family have since reconstructed to the same dimensions -- with six tiny pews seating twelve worshippers.







I did take a short drive up to the GM proving ground, but they don't allow visitors. And after I have been buying GM for 44 years. Hmmph!

I pulled into a Loves Truck stop back in Yuma, planning to spend the night. As I was walking to the store I passed a fire truck and a fireman just opening the door to get in. I asked him if he was a paramedic also and was pleased with his response. I showed him my hand, which is turning quite purple, and told him about my wrist. He had me flex it this way and that (same range of motion as my right wrist), then checked my arm and felt no breaks. Take Ibuprofen to reduce the swelling he told me. I spent 3 minutes with him and this is what the clinic wanted \$250+ for? That is why I walked out.

I did some grocery shopping then went back to Loves. But I don't think I'll spend the night here. I am next to the road with plenty of screeching semi-tractor brakes; I can hear the loudspeaker telling truckers their shower is ready; and there is an airport right next door, man are those jets loud. As soon as I send this I think I will move to the cracker barrel.

An interesting side light: I did not spend a penny today and saw some great sights. Breakfast, lunch and dinner in the RV. Tomorrow I will bike around Yuma, \$6 for entry here; \$10 for entry there; \$2 to ride the train. Just goes to show you don't have to spend alot to get a lot.

But I am looking forward to it. Some good history to see, and they have most of it connected by bike paths through the Riverfront Park.

Until the next one.....