



# In Search of Eldorado



Day 30  
Sunday  
February 3<sup>rd</sup>

Super Bowl Sunday  
Yuma  
to  
Organ Pipe Cactus  
National Monument

Weather  
Some drizzle. 60's and cloudy

## Hello to Family & Friends

With the wind at my back, and a fairly good wind it was too, I headed east to Gila Bend. The sign above is mentioned in Roadside America because the '5 old crabs' makes it somewhat unique.

Gila Bend was...different. There is basically one Main St., named crazily, Main St. Almost everything and anything to do or that can be done is on Main St.

After filling the tank with diesel, 25.787 gallons of a 26 gallon tank (whew!!), I drove across the street to the visitor center. Maybe it was because of Super Bowl Sunday, but maybe they just need to update their sign.



## 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!'

My intent here was to stock up on gas, food, water, and anything else I might need for a couple days off the grid in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. The visitor center was supposed to supply info on the sights to see. This would determine if I spend tonight here or push on to Organ Pipe. The Chevron had no milk, deli or brochures; the Circle K had no milk, deli or brochures. Remembering that hotels usually have a rack of brochures in the lobby, I headed down to the Space Age Lodge.



Stovall's Space Age Lodge opened in 1965. A local man by the name of Al Stovall, had friends in the military and government. His connections enabled him to get autographed photos of astronauts which he hung on the walls of the restaurant. He also owned a plastics factory which produced the custom space-age decorations that made his motel the closest thing to the Jetsons this side of the 23<sup>rd</sup> century. Then Al died and the photos were returned to his family. Best Western came along and renovated the place. Al's ghost may not have been happy about that because shortly thereafter, the restaurant burned down. Its ruins were flagged with a tongue-in-cheek banner, claiming it had been attacked by aliens.



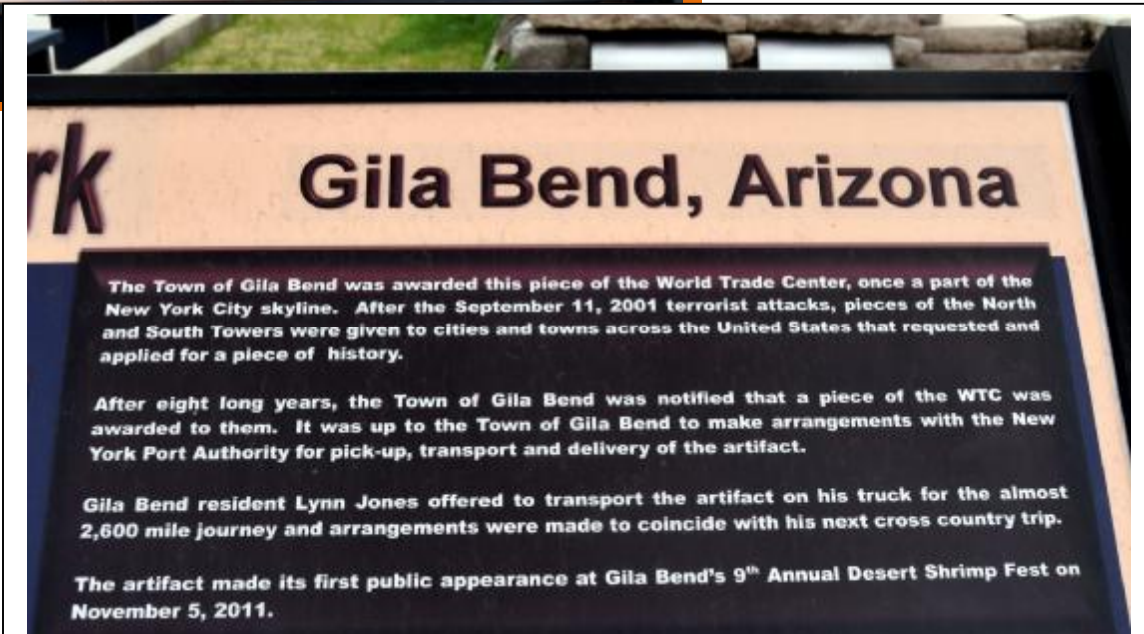
The restaurant was rebuilt and reopened in 1999 and has remained pretty much the same since then. I shortened the Roadside America description a little to fit it in the time allotted. (huh?)

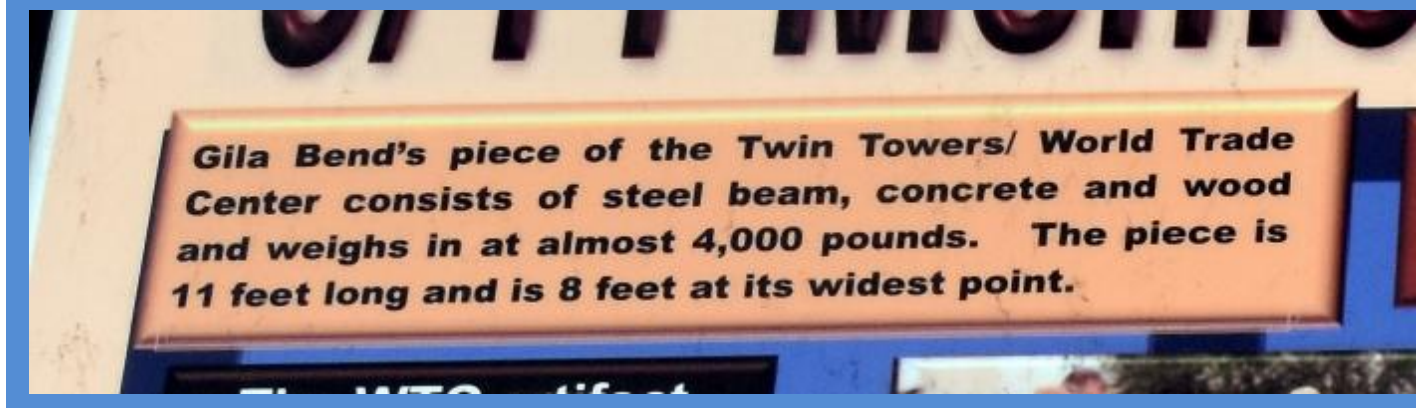
Entering the lobby I asked the girl behind the counter if they had any brochures. Nope. How about a grocery store? Only thing open today is Dollar General or The Dollar Store if the gas stations don't have any.



On the way back to Loves I stopped at the Gila Bend 911 Memorial Park. I ate my lunch and then took a walk around.

It took over 10 years to receive a section and have it displayed in the park.





At Loves I was told to get milk at the Dollar General, because it would be about half the price of Loves. So I bought my milk at Dollar General, a first for me. I also decided that I had enough food to last a couple more days.

Since the visitor center/museum was not open, the Gillespie dam was north rather than south, the animals made from steel seemed to have disappeared, and the Bausita National Trail was a little off the beaten path and easier to access in Tucson, my last stop was the municipal airport.



A pair of RF 101 fighter jets which flew recon missions in Vietnam, one of which is pictured above, flank the entrance road. Not sure you can really call it an entrance road. From the highway it is about 300 yards and you're on the runway. A small airport.

Next stop is Ajo.



An interesting little town. More exciting than Gila Bend for sure. This is the central plaza. Very Spanish, very large and very empty. Probably just because it's Sunday.





Talk about off-the-beaten-path amazing, this is one of those sights that deserves a second glance, and maybe a tour.

Above is the Curley Public School main building, an architectural masterpiece of Spanish Colonial Revival style which was built in 1919. Older than Gpops. The school had fallen into disrepair and in 2000-2001 was targeted as a main cog in the wheel of the revitalization of downtown Ajo. \$9.6 million dollars was spent to purchase and rehab the buildings into 30 live/work rental apartments for artists and artisans and creative home businesses. There are eight buildings spread out over a seven acre campus making 114,000 square feet of apartments, classrooms, workshops, a huge auditorium and an indoor/outdoor stage. I plan to check this out on my back from Organ Pipe.



For about a mile I drove through this area which was so 'cowboy westernish' I couldn't believe it. The small hills of jagged rocks, saguaro cacti, creosote bushes. I felt like I was looking at a colorized version of every black & white 'B' western of the 30's.





First stop? You guessed it, the visitor center.



Site # 18 at the Twin Peaks campground.





This is an Organ Pipe Cactus. I took this photo and was waiting to see if the sunset would add any more color, when a bird, a Cactus Wren possibly? Flew up and added character to the second shot below.



I gave you a respite today after yesterday's plethora of photos and plaques. That was the longest newsletter of this trip so far.

I plan to be here for a couple days. Hiking, biking. Speaking of biking – I plugged the bike battery into the inverter last night with the intent of letting it charge on my way to Gila Bend and Organ Pipe. Half way to Gila Bend I realized I forgot to turn the inverter on. I can do this from inside so I just pulled over and flipped the switch. After setting up camp I checked on the battery and found that the lights were not lit, neither charged or charging. I took the whole setup over to the john, no power at the campsite, and plugged it in. Still no lights. AAAArrrggggHHH!! You have got to be kidding! Dummy me. The bike charger has two plugs like a laptop, the laptop to the adapter and then a separate cord from the adapter to the outlet. The wall plug was not plugged into the adapter. I put it together the right way for as much sun as I had left. I also tried the generator. The house batteries started to charge, the bike battery was charging, but when I plugged in the laptop I must have overloaded it. The generator slowed, and slowed, and stopped.

So I am not sure how much bike riding I will get in tomorrow. Although there is a 'patio talk' by a ranger at 11:00 tomorrow I would like to attend. So I probably won't be out riding before that.

In the words of Doris Day (also born in 1922 like Gpops)

Que sera, sera  
Whatever will be, will be

Until next time.....