

Creede Trip of 1952

Before describing travels let me take you back into my life in Griffith, IN in those days of my pre-teen and early teen years. Well, I was just getting aware of some things. Maybe they were trivial matters but these issues had to be coped with in my day-to-day living. In the final analysis, my anxieties were put to rest, partly by this travel event in my life, and ultimately over years of living.

In my family, my father, Bennett, worked at a pipe bending plant in East Chicago. There was a need for pipes – bent pipes – in the oil refineries in East Chicago and Whiting. Although we were now able to understand it totally at the time, the particular industry of bending pipes was struggling in East Chicago. Just after Bennett retired in about 1964, his workplace closed – a long feared event. It became cheaper for pipes to be bent elsewhere and sent to the Northern Indiana “Region” by train. Think of it. This East Chicago plant was a workplace of the 30s and 40s. I remember seeing it a couple times. It was old time industrial. Now new more-efficient mechanical technology had been added to plants elsewhere.

Several times during those early years of my life, Dad would come home and after some minutes, he would say, “Well, the big shots came through today.” He meant the “suits” had come through the bending floor preceding their bid to buy the company. Mom feared those words. Were they going to buy the company for continued bending? Were they going to buy the property – the land – and close the plant? Thankfully, during my young life, those walk-throughs just ended in forcing me to learn a new name for where my father worked. A new company name to mention when someone asked.

So given the condition of Dad’s workplace, Dad never received the two weeks of vacation that were standard for steelworkers and oil refinery workers. Both of those latter groups had strong unions and had bargained with steel and oil corporations for years. They had won vacation guarantees as part of the contract package. However, Dad was a pipe fitter. His union was good, but did not have the large numbers. Also, their membership was not concentrated so that their membership could strike for special benefits. A few pipe fitters were here. A few were there. In fact, pipe fitters were often like itinerant preachers. They went to a job site, did their work, and when it was completed they went to another site.

The bottom line is that in those days it really “got under my skin” that every family with kids in my neighborhood were gone for two weeks a year to some grand destination in Wisconsin, Minnesota or Iowa. (There were no Disneyland (1955), Knott’s Berry Farm (1968), etc.) in those days. Travel was limited. There were no interstate highways.) Nevertheless, my friends would return each summer with stories about their cabin, their lake, and the sights they saw. To be very pointed, I remember that the Ross’s from next door always went to Three Lakes, WI., northeast of Rhinelander. I was able to hear about and watch the preparations. Then they left with lots of fanfare on the previous night. I was hired to mow their lawn and weed their flower gardens, so that upon return their place looked better than it had looked since spring. That combo of mowing and weeding was repeated at several other neighbors in Griffith each summer. I mowed and dreamed of going off to the north woods.

Was I selfish? Almost as compensation for the lack of vacations, Mom would stop her ironing about twice a week and take me and my brother, Roy, to Cedar Lake where we would set on a pier and fish. No one else was that lucky. However, I yearned for trying to catch something other than yellow-bellied bullheads and perch. To see something other than the scenery afforded by this cabin-crammed shorelines of Cedar Lake. This struggle went on internally and

never got aired beyond an “I wish...” statement. Dad was not going to get time off and there would not be money to travel if he did.

Finally came the summer of 1952. Seventh grade was just concluded. I was just 13 (Lauren’s age). I don’t know if something was going on behind my back between my cousin Bob and my folks. Maybe I knew the whole story and just can’t remember. However, Bob and his son, Jack, invited me to go out to Colorado and New Mexico. I am betting that Roy was just starting a job at the Griffith Theater about that time so he was not interested, I believe. This really wasn’t a vacation trip for Bob. He worked in Whiting for City Service Oil refinery and the oil workers were on strike. I vaguely remember that Bob was heading west to investigate other work opportunities. I believe he was looking for temporary work, but lots of people were moving west in those days. So who knows what might have happened if he found a match out there.

I should mention that my three cousins by my Aunt Nancy were Bob, Ethel, and Ruby. Aunt Nancy was the oldest of Dad’s siblings. She was 13 years older than Dad. I believe she married Loren Love at the age of 20 or so. Hence, all my cousins were married adults. In fact, I regularly had to remind them that I was their cousin when I was introduced as a nephew.

Bob, his wife, Helen, and their son, Jack (two years older than I), lived only one block away. We lived at 323 Woodlawn and they lived at about 235 Harvey St. I did not play there much; but in the early days of television, I would go over as everyone gathered around to watch celebrities like Liberace.

So let’s get traveling. I have some mental images of Bob’s car was probably four years old. It was a Here is a picture that gets close to what it looked like. wheel covers and paint is a sort of dull green. The I remember was the sloping back end. In later years, away. That was probably good since on our trip we on one sunny hot day; and the sunlight going through window, reflected off a shaving mirror laid back there. small fire that burned a quarter-size hole in the roof Remember! No mirrors in the back windows!!



our trip west. Chevrolet. Take off the important thing the slope went stopped for gas the back It caused a upholstery.

The way west was probably US Highway 30 known as the Lincoln Highway. Stretching from New York City to San Francisco, it actually went just south of Griffith. (It cut through land that is still owned by my cousins, Helen and Charles Bielefeld.) It was often 4 lanes, but it was nothing like the interstates which began after the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956. US30 did not bypass towns and cities. So although you drove at 50 mph for a while, one had to cope with traffic lights and city traffic on a rather regular basis.

Just because it was my first significant trip, I’ll bet I even liked seeing the corn fields of Illinois and Iowa. I know that we stopped one night in a motel in Lincoln, NE. I will bet it was the first evening. That would have been 533 miles by today’s routes. A lot of driving for one day – even today. It was dark and very rainy when we stopped. Motels in those days were small cabins which might even have had kitchen areas. Ours was a cabin and I remember vividly that it was rather dimly lit and Spartan. My most distinct memory was our activity in placing the pots and pans available with the cabin to catch the water coming through the roof. In those days, there was no calling the manager for another room.

I expect that the next day we drove to Canon City, CO. I just remember that we slept there another night in a cabin under less wet conditions. The trip from Lincoln to Canon City was another 580 miles or so. (My days of travel from Buffalo, NY to Griffith were about 540 miles. They were quite doable on interstates. I wonder how tired Bob was.)



The terrain had gotten interesting on that second day traveling to Canon City as the land in western Nebraska got more barren and arid. Hum. Our travel crossed the Platte River or its forks several times. Most of what I remember was dry land under the bridges. There wasn't much water to be seen. Nowadays things are different. If you look at the aerial shots provided by Google Earth, the land south of the Platte is all green. Zooming in one sees that the green is made up of thousands of green circles. Irrigation has changed that aridness into cropland. Look from 50,000 feet at Imperial, NE (50 miles south of the Platte). Everything is irrigated! It only took 65 years.

We played games to pass the time. Most popular with us was various versions of the alphabet

search. There were lots of billboards in those days. Luckily states legislated less or no advertising along most interstates. However, in the 50s it was easy for Jack and I to go through the alphabet – finding the letters consecutively (a first, b second, etc.) in the words on billboards. That could be done with license plates on passing cars. That version was a little harder.

Hark what do we see? Here comes another set of signs. Read them all!!! Burma Shave signs. They are collector's items now. But back then, the signs as well as the shaving cream were very popular. The set of signs provided a limerick that was usually funny. In the end of 2014 going toward Needles, CA, Bev and I found a set. It was fun to see them again.





Out of Nebraska and into Eastern Colorado. Here is where I believe we were traveling on roads off of US30. That Lincoln Highway goes to Denver. Yet, our approach to Colorado Springs was almost directly from the east. Maybe northeast down what is now US24. It too was barren country and arid. It still is from the aerial view. Less green than Nebraska. On the ride toward Colorado Springs that afternoon, the terrain was flat and tended toward yellow due to dry grass. Just a memory. Then finally out ahead we saw the outline of Pike's Peak (14,114') – faint and low on the horizon. That was the main excitement of that day. Yet off to the left (southwest) there was a black spot that moved toward us. It proved to be a dust storm and it made the ride interesting too. I don't recall that we encountered any problems. We just got closer and closer to Colorado Springs and Pike's Peak got bigger very very slowly. Pike's Peak is

about 12 miles west of Colorado Springs and is the highest peak in this section of the Rockies. Colorado has 53 fourteeners – peaks higher than 14,000 feet. The highest is Mount Elbert which is 14,440’.

I remember the sun at the cabin on the next morning. Our first excursion of the trip was to see Royal Gorge which I always consider to be a Colorado Springs attraction. Colorado Springs is now the home of the US Air Force Academy. Looking at maps reminded me that we actually slept much closer to the Gorge. We stayed in a motel in Canon City.

Royal Gorge is now known as a theme park. Those were probably just developing to capture tourists. It was the birth of an industry so to speak. All I remember was the huge suspension bridge across this deep deep canyon. The bridge was metal and cable as you would believe. The deck of the bridge would not support car traffic. Maybe bikers and golf carts are allowed. Most of what one sees on the bridge are pedestrians. The bridge deck was made of large wooden timbers – probably 12” square. They would probably be referred to as bridge timbers. (The size of the timbers we used under the Rainy Lake dock back in the late 1970s.)

Jack and I contributed to pollution and defacing of this natural beauty of the gorge. Do you remember those balsawood gliders? They were simple three or four pieces of balsa. A fuselage and a thin wing, at least. We flew one off the bridge. It was so small I doubt we were able to see it for long against the backdrop of the rock as it traveled on its maiden – and only flight – down into the canyon.

The Royal Gorge bridge was built in 1929. It spans the Arkansas River at an altitude of 955 feet. Until 2001, it held the record as the highest bridge in the world. Believe it or not, since 2001, thirteen bridges have been opened that are higher than this one. The highest bridge in the world is in China where 11 of the 13 reside. That highest bridge is the Sidu River Bridge which is 1627 feet above the Sidu.

[I revisited Royal Gorge several years ago, possibly 2009. I remember that it was in the winter and the grounds of the theme park were full of snow. Nothing to see. We had just come through a beautiful snow storm on a road through the gorge of the Arkansas River. That day’s journey began in Alamosa and we traveled to the northeast to the Great Sand Dunes National Park. Then backtracking we took US285 straight north. As we proceeded, snow began to fall. By the time we reached Salida, CO, we decided we should stop for a while and watch the storm. We had left US285 and had found US50 that would be our route to Colorado Springs. The rest of our trip would be essentially east.

We took shelter in the Public Library for about an hour before we decided to push on. The 2-lane road was good even though it was slow going with the snow. Not much traffic. (Hum, maybe they know something we don’t.) However, it was beautiful. Even though I have no pictures of it, I remember the cliffs towering above us. I might have enjoyed it even more if I wasn’t watching road conditions so closely. It was a 40-mile trek which I would love to travel again.]

I recall that after the Gorge visit Bob took us in the afternoon to visit some folks in a town that might have been Alamosa, CO. I can’t recall how they were related to Bob. My guess is that all the people we met along the way were somehow related to Bob on the Love side of the family. The one facet that interested me in this visit was that there were people in the house that spoke Mexican --- I probably did realize that the language was more precisely named Spanish. It was the first time I had heard a “foreign” language spoken by a person who was in a place which I expected only English. How naive, but how much a learning experience. I wish the veils would part and I could remember what the situation was in that house. Later, as I will write, I will again encounter the language issue.

Where we stayed that evening, I don’t remember. The next morning, I remember being in Creede, a town in the mountains where there was a mining economy in the 1950s. Creede had been a boomtown in the late 1800s. [To my surprise, in my next year of school, I came across a thin monograph where there was a full-page picture of Creede in its heyday.] Down to 1966 it was still producing silver, gold, zinc, and copper. It’s last mine – Homestake’s Bulldog Mine – closed in 1985. So what does “boomtown” mean. Well, Wikipedia says that the town population was 600 in 1889. It

grew to more than 10,000 by December, 1891. Elsewhere in my readings, there are claims that Creede was at its peak in 1892. Then there came the Silver Panic of 1893. Silver prices dropped and many of the Colorado mines closed. The boom was over. Creede settled into a more managed rate of silver production. [Think of North Dakota oil.] It never became a ghost town like many other such towns.

Some images never fade. My image of Creede was the shaded entry to some restaurant where we might have had a breakfast. To get into the restaurant, I had to get up on and walk down the board sidewalk that stretched the length of that city block. A board sidewalk!!! How western was that!!!

As I will show later, the town held the promise of another scenery feast. The north end of town held the entrance of the deep canyon which held the relics of many old mines. But it was not the mines that would be my feast, it was the rugged towering rocks that I loved. This Colorado was not corn country.



Somehow, I tried to capture Creede with only one photo. It was the picture of a mine. Now I wonder where it was at. Was it a recent silver mine still operating in the '50s? It was not in the canyon. The Chamber of Commerce and the people they asked do not remember it. Like other memories, it fades into the shadows.

Leaving Creede we went to our ultimate destination. Maybe it was not Bob's ultimate, but it turned out to be mine. The fuzzy memory of that morning ride from Creede was a memory of a narrow road and steep drop-offs. The road in the 50s certainly was not as good as the one that exists today. It might not even have been the same road. So often roads, like our drive to International Falls, are patchworks of improvements – straightening, leveling, etc. – done every 10 years or so.

We went up from Creede to a pristine valley in the mountains. We always considered it to be a "dude ranch." Now it is called Pearl Lakes Trout Club. Spread through that treeless valley were houses of wealthy people who came there to enjoy fishing, horseback riding, and maybe hunting in the primitive surroundings of a up-to-date per 1950 home-away-from-home. Bob's relation to the caretakers is lost, but I believe they were cousins on the Love side of the family. Vaguely, I

believe Bob would have found some work with them.



The first picture here was the view looking toward the west. This picture was taken from a ridge in back of the caretaker's building. Looking east, there were even more lakes and cabin.

Pearl Lakes is at 10,500 feet with ridges around it going to 11,500 feet. In this region just 6 miles south, as the crow flies, is the Rio Grande Reservoir. The source of the Rio Grande at 9500 feet.



I believe the Love's place is shown in the picture on the left. When you came in the door of that house from the other side, you entered a big room that served as a sort of store with a couple glass cases and a few items for purchase by the dude-ranchers. It also contained a long (by my standards) "picnic" table where all the meals were served. The Loves, some hired hands, and now us three were fed at that table. Someone (Mrs. Love?) was kept busy providing three meals a day.

Jack and I had a new friend whom we got acquainted with quickly. Her name was Jody. She was about our age and again I believe she was related to the Loves.

Fast forward to the first (and last) morning at the ranch. We ate a big breakfast and left for the corral. Someone

saddled our horses. I got 5 minutes of riding lessons and we were off. The Three Cavaleiros!

It was on that first ride that we got some spot where Jody got off her horse to retrieve something she had dropped. She wasn't much more attuned to riding than I. Her horse – then loosely attended – took off for the corral. My horse with me attached decided that was a good idea. It tried to follow. Little Billy wasn't interested in following so I did something that was supposed to make my horse stop. The next thing I knew I was looking like a western horse show billboard. My horse chose to stand up on its hind legs – front hooves in the air. Luckily it had stopped. When given the opportunity, I dismounted and let Jody and Jack ride back to the corral. My first ride was over. I walked back.

Lunch was again a big lunch. More that I would normally have had.



After lunch, we went back to the horses. There we are. Bob probably took the picture. I am in the middle on my little sorrel.

On that afternoon ride we met two other travelers on horseback way up here. It was a Hispanic man and his young son. We conversed with them briefly. I just remember that the man proposed that we might trade horses, but we declined.

Each of us had a bottle of pop from the store and we went off to an empty shack to drink that pop. Arriving at that location near the incoming dirt road, we hitched up our horses to one of the vertical posts that supported the cabin roof. Again, not smart. The reins rapped around the posts slide down, maybe to the ground. The horses were tethered in an awkward position. After a few minutes, with the pop bottle opened, someone decided to shake the pop and shot it at another. Doing that spooked the horses. All three broke loose and decided to head back to the corral. This was getting to be a habit.

At least one of the horses broke the bit in its mouth.

We all felt the altitude. As young teens, we didn't go anywhere slowly. We did a lot of running and climbing. Often, we had to stop to catch our breath.



This photo was taken from a spot behind the caretaker's house up on the southern ridge of the valley. We had had a busy day.

The dinner was probably big again.

Bedtime came and I went to bed in our quarters which were in a loft. I woke with nausea and symptoms which were diagnosed by the people there as being altitude sickness. Too much running, too much eating, too much excitement.

I am sure I had been warned to watch myself. But Bob wasn't around much and probably did not know quite when to demand that we rest. A woman in our party would have helped, I bet.

So Bob packed us all up, put us in the car, said good-byes, and drove down the mountain in the middle of the night. He drove to the nearest hospital which was past Creede. It was in the town of Del Norte. There I was admitted. I stayed one or two days. Too long. However, even after three or four days, I wasn't eating well and had not fully recovered.

Three items about the hospital stay.

The hospital was a big white frame house set back off the highway and separated from the road by a stone wall. The hospital was run by nuns. Importantly, they and the nurses aides all spoke Spanish. English was a

second language. I felt rather isolated. The treatment provided was not much more than rest as I recall. I was alone a lot.

Second, I don't believe a buzzer system was installed and, partly because of shyness, I miss-timed one of the calls-of-nature. Then I was very embarrassed and spent a lot of time before calling of help. Did I think it was going away?

Third, my room had a window. From my bed I could see the hill in the distance on the other side of the highway. There on the hill was letter D for Del Norte.

Finally, I was released and we started the trip home. No more Pearl Lakes. No extra travel to New Mexico as planned. How this impacted Bob I will never know? I am sure he stayed working for City Service or Citgo until he retired. After that I believe he was influential in the creation of the Griffith airport. Bob flew and was responsible for my first two airplane rides.

We went from Del Norte to Alamosa a short distance away. There we stayed with a couple whose name was McCullough. For a day, Bob went with Mr. McCullough to a prospecting site where agate finds had occurred. One of those was a huge slab in McCullough's living room. (The Monte Vista, CO has an airport named McCullough Airport. Hum.)

From Alamosa, we took off and drove home to Indiana. I remember going through Dodge City, Kansas. Also, Salida, KS.

At home, it still took me some time to get back to normal. Think of this. It was the early 50s. I believe from the pharmacological point of view vitamins were just coming out – at least in my Indiana. There was lots of talk or debate that said I was suffering from some vitamin deficiency. I can't recall that any vitamins got added to my diet.

The Return to Creede 2016

Thankfully, in the last few years, we have done a lot of travel. Some of that travel was international. Most of the travel was within the United States. Long driving trips usually planned by my navigator, Beverly. One interesting item is the encounter I have with the desk clerk at a motel or owner of a bed-and-breakfast when were are checking out. Those hosts often come up with the statement, "Stop back and see us again." They say it for business courtesy. It is appreciated. However, for most of our overnight stays, we seldom ever return. So the statement might be useful for the franchise, if there is one. Generally, the line is just a "throw-away". It is what they say – like "Have a good day." Courtesy.

I would like to return to many places that I remember. I would like Beverly to see those places so that my rambling stories would have some backdrop in her memory. Last year in 2015, we went to Pinedale, WY. and then took the fifty mile drive up to the Green River Lakes to see Square Top Mt. (The last 23 miles of that drive was a gravel washboard that forced me to slow down to about 25 mile per hour.) That was a return to a scenic spot that I had seen in August, 1970. The day was cloudy. Hey, that was what it was like in most of the 1969 visit. Not too much had changed. There was much more sign of state or federal feeding of the wild elk that roamed the area. The Green River still ran out of the lower lake in its natural state. No dams, no new structures. The old walking bridge was probably much improved from the time I caught a couple trout from it. There were more people.

There is that phrase "You can't go home again." That is true on two counts. First, the place you are returning to has changed over time. The landscape changes in that Wyoming spot were inpresceptable. If changes are inpresceptable,

the weather conditions, your associates, and your physical and mental state have changed. So you have returned to a new place so to speak. Secondly, your memory of the old encounter is fuller than what you receive from that return visit. Ten minutes away from your return, you are asking yourself what is the status of some feature that you forgot to check out. What if you had walked farther down the trail ignoring your travel schedule and the rain that was starting to fall? What was the status of the link between the two lakes which you had seen on your first visit? Where were those friendly Nebraska campers who gave you shelter from the rain? (Whoops. Noone could restore that remembered encounter.) No you can't go home again. But we try. And I try without learning that there will be an element of disappointment in each attempt. (Maybe somewhere in this musing is a suggestion to living in the "now". Return and drink in your surroundings in the "now" devoid of the memories of the past and demands of the future. Like eating and thinking about each bite rather than just consuming. Hum.) Nostalgia rules my heart.

Well, this year in 2016, I tried again to return to a site that I visited 64 years earlier. I tried to "return to Creede." That return would include the town of Creede and the return to the dude ranch in the mountains. The trip was a success even more than I had expected.

On Beverly's birthday on July 17, we left the Albuquerque conference and drove north to Colorado. We went into Alamosa and turned west. We traveled through Monte Vista and came to Del Norte. There was the D still on the hill. I had to take two passes by the old hospital to confirm what I was seeing. In 64 years, the hospital must have been converted from the big white house into a care center or assisted living facility. Now it looked vacant.

I find that I neglected to take a photo of that old hospital. It would have shown the rock wall that I photographed on my first visit. Further, that 1952 photo is being safely held by Cousin Shirley in Indiana because I accidentally left my old photo album with her. Well, I will limp along with what I have.

We went to the new hospital in Del Norte. It was Sunday evening and no one was around. We did talk to several young persons there. There was very little that they knew about the old hospital. Outside I took a picture of a buffalo herd grazing in a field across from the hospital.

We drove on down the road to a town that I don't remember called South Fork. It looked more touristy. This was probably the last stop before Creede and the wilderness areas in the vicinity. They had several motels and outfitters.



The place Beverly chose to stay was an older non-franchise place. As you went up the steps, you were greeted with a sign to the right of the door that said, "You are protected here by the Second Amendment." The sign was in the shape of an automatic pistol. We were in redneck country or, at least, NRA country. The room we received was bare bones but serviceable. In the morning, we were able to have coffee and nibbles sitting outside enjoying the view.

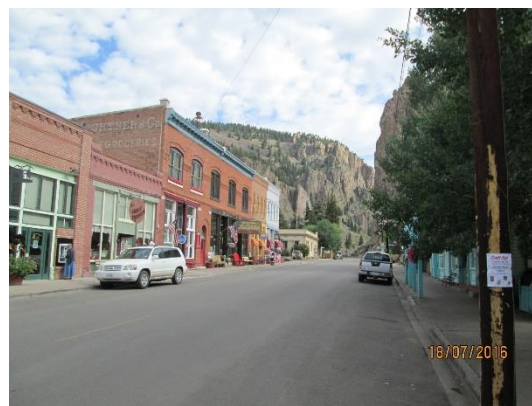
We got on the road relatively early. We are anxious to get to Creede, the next town roughly 20 miles down the road – CO149.



At Creede, we drove around a little. Early we took this photo on Creede's Main Street. It interests me now that my memory only recalls entering a restaurant. I must have been really distracted from that split in the rocks at the end of this street. Thru that gateway is the mines and a beautiful canyon that I'll show later. Back in 1952, I doubt would have gone through that northern gateway. The mining was still going on for another 30 years. The roads would have been restricted to miners.

Without any doubt the most obvious difference I saw in this town was: No Board Sidewalks!!!! I understand, but I was sort of disappointed. Still I was pleased that Creede had given me the memory from way back in '52. (I remember that in Indiana, we had concrete sidewalks in 1952, but my street where I lived was an unpaved dirt – tending toward washboard – road.)

Bev and I parked and walked the length of the street. Creede had become a cute trendy little town. They have a number of shops that creates a neat clean welcoming Main Street. Shoppers will be happy.



Sitting down on the north end of town to drink it all in, we could look right to view the beginning of the rock spires that would continue into the canyon. To the left, we could see more of the Main Street. The light blue restaurant with the



pillars and the overhead porch was the restaurant I remembered from 1952. A real estate man we met said it was probably the oldest establishment in town. Just a low board sidewalk.

I am not certain what order we did things, but we stopped into the Chamber of Commerce to tell them that we had arrived. ☺ We were the people who a couple weeks earlier had corresponded with them by email and phone. I had sent them pictures from my first trip and they had responded that locals thought the photos were pics of Hermit Lakes. Brad whom I had written was busy with another visitor and Bev and I had a nice conversation with another gentleman who had seen our correspondence.

Finally, we drove into the mining area. As I mentioned somewhere in this paper, I'm certain this was off-limits on my first trip. The mines were still operating.

Main Street turned into gravel at the north end of town and the canyon walls lifted on both sides. A creek ran beside the road first on the right side and then on the left. [Google is very useful.] The creek's name was Willow Creek and the road was named West Willow Creek Road. How appropriate!! But there were no signs of any willow trees.





Above is the canyon entrance. Check the spires. The road is smooth gravel. This road and especially where we turn around about a mile ahead is probably made of mine tailings from the mines.

In the next photo shows our approaching the site of two or three mine shafts. Investigations disclosed that these represented three different mines or mining companies.



Look for the brown patches.

← One mine

← Second mine

Look at the tailing piles on the hillside. Some barriers hold the piles from tumbling to the creek below.

← Commodore Mine Ore House and Chutes. Don't be deceived. We are quite some distance away. It was a huge structure -- tall and broad.

Note our road goes over piles of mine tailings.

The site of this contraption is at 9100 feet while Creede is at 8800 feet.

One of the two upper mines is the Last Chance Mine. Probably the lower

of the two.

Two other mines are in the vicinity. The Bachelor Mine and The Bulldog Mine. The Bulldog Mine was on a connecting road west of ours at a distance of about 15 miles down our road from the point of this picture. All the mines are on what was called the Bachelor Loop which returns to Creede. See the map below and check out the link to Anne's Travels <http://www.annestravels.net/creede-colorado/> for further investigation of the Bachelor Loop tour.

To the right is Beverly approaching the Commodore Mine Ore House and Chutes.



You can see three or four of the chutes quite plainly.

Oh, me. I see that we only went into the canyon about a mile and a half. The road and others like it continue back into more mining country and more wilderness that can be explored on Google Earth. Our particular canyon broadens out farther north into more of a narrow valley between ridges. There is no end to the number of canyons and gravel roads. So much that one could explore!! Next time? Get a jeep, stay in Creede and drive those roads. Have a working GPS!!!

As we had driven into the canyon, we saw a group of people disembarking from their pick-ups with ATVs. As we left, they were motoring up the road in order to do the exploring well beyond this point. They would out for a day of it. They had a beautiful day. But ATVers would have a dusty ride on this gravel.

It was still fairly early when we left Creede to find my mountain valley. As I mentioned before the route was to go up CO149. It was a nicely paved road. What is cute is that the road does a hairpin into Creede and then out. No elevation requiring a switchback just a road into town and then out.

Leaving Creede the road goes southwest to get around Bristol Head (11,500'). On the other side, we moved northwest for another 10 miles. Luckily we found our gravel road to the Hermit Lakes. Driving west I looked at the marshy lakes to my left and I was pretty much convinced that this was not my valley. Too much marsh surrounding the lakes. Not enough dry land. Further I remember entering our valley on the south and this road seemed to be all along the north edge of the Hermit Lakes valley. About five miles of driving took us to an arch over the road that declared that this was the area beyond was a private club. The club caretaker's house was right there and the caretaker and his wife came out to see what we wanted. Ultimately we went inside briefly so that they could study my pictures. The caretaker declared that the photos from 1952 were pictures of the Pearl Lake region. It turned out that we had driven by the road to Pearl Lakes just before reaching the arch. The valley of Hermit Lakes and the valley of Pearl Lakes were two neighboring valleys of a collection of 6 or 7 such valleys that stretch west from CO149. You could call it "Finger Valley Region" like the Finger Lakes Region of New York.

That piece of information made all the difference. I had expected that I would not find that former dude ranch (now a private club) because I didn't have any time to scrutinize Google Earth. In the investigation that I had done at home, the Pearl Lakes valley had not been noticed. I had tried to shoehorn the Hermit Lakes valley into my recollection. Its aerial image had not quite fit even at home and certainly not during the drive in.

We went back to the turnoff one quarter mile from the arch. Turning left onto this new road, we went northwest about three miles and up 1000 feet. When the valley came into view, I was revisiting that former place of my childhood (or early teenhood). It was a great find.



A link to my best shots of the Pearl Lakes region is in the upper left. Click on it. The beginning starts at the caretaker's house and sweeps west. (We'll see if it still works after the conversion to PDF and then loading it into the website. Technology.)

Right away, we met the caretaker of Pearl Lakes, Richard. We met him down by his house and the maintenance sheds. We told him of my interest in this place of his. He remembered hearing that Loves had been caretakers a couple generations back. That was neat that that relationship got confirmed. If that video works above, Bev is on the soundtrack affirming how neat it was to hear that from Richard.

Richard was a man about in his 60s. I don't know if he said that he stayed up there year around. However, he did mention plowing snow with a grader which we later saw parked off the road. Relatively new equipment. He said he spend some time in Creede but claimed that it was too noisy for him. His life up here was very quiet. Yet he seemed resigned to a retirement in Creede in a few years.

I told him that I wanted to look for a big rock from one of my pictures. It was probably up the ridge in back of his house. That was fine with him. We left and drove back up the road to get up where we could walk across the ridge. Later on, I yelled something to Richard who was now by his house and he came up for another few minutes to talk. He was a very nice fellow.

Now the rock. If you go back to the 1952 half of this epic, you'll see a huge rock with many grooves with Jack, Jody, and I sitting there. Bob – or someone - must have been getting tired out taking photos. As you would expect, time does not stand still in the past 65 years. Trees grow. So we found some massive boulders back there among the stand of trees which now dominated the face of the ridge. No boulders stood out like the one in our 1952 picture. Trees were everywhere. One boulder that I found had its back sloped so we could have ascended it easily. But the front, seen



below, would have to be morphed drastically to see the old rock. There are fissures in this boulder but there would have had to be a lot of splitting and heaving to get this from that old rock. So as I bemoaned earlier, I wish there had been time (and I chose the amount of time in this hunt) to search for that old boulder. I didn't choose to climb much. Maybe my rock is up the ridge somewhere.

More moaning. There is still an untravelled road heading east in Pearl Lakes Trout Club. Could I ask to drive it? Would it satisfy

me? I wonder if I could rent one of those homes – like a time share. Buy two Colorado fishing licenses and quietly teach Beverly to fish while we get acclimatized to the 10,500' altitude. Dreaming at age 77. It never stops.

Leaving from Pearl Lakes, CO149 took us toward Slumgullion Pass at 11,530'. I believe that was the highest pass this trip. 10th highest in Colorado. Another pass was called Monarch was 11,312'. It was more fun driving because it never seemed to end – maybe we started lower. It really made the Prius work. We crossed both passes in one day staying the night at Buena Vista, CO. (Monarch is a ski area. But this region also includes Breckenridge, Keystone, and Aspen. Snow country.)



Above is the view to the west from the top of Slumgullion.

Right by the pass, Slumgullion, we had planned to take a gravel road east toward another very isolated pass called Los Pinos pass at 10,200'. Incidentally, the gravel road has a Colorado number and its non-number name in Google is George Bush Drive. Hum. Google Earth shows a picture of the pass marker for Los Pinos, but the caption of the photo says, "If you got here you must have taken a wrong turn." That pass would have been about half way to the end of the gravel. 40 miles as the crow flies of gravel. It is another one of my lists of moanings. We decided not to take that road. Next time? With a good GPS and cell phone? Constant updates phoned out?

We drove further on CO149 toward Lake City, CO nestled in the wilderness. I don't believe we reached there or intended to reach there. We were just driving toward Lake City to see another awesome oddity of nature – an example of mass wasting. The oddity is named the Slumgullion Earthflow. The [earthflow](#), a slow moving landslide, crawled down the valley about 700 years ago creating the 4 miles (6.4 km) long and 2,000 feet (610 m) wide mass. Wikipedia says, "It is "a striking example of mass wasting (the movement of large masses of earth material)." Lake San

Cristobal was dammed by the earthflow. The earthflow has been moving continuously for about 300 years over older stable rock.[3] It moves at a rate of about 7 meters (23 feet) per year.”

Below is picture of the Earthflow. Except for the tree growth across the top of the flow, the slide looks as if it could have happened yesterday.



It will provide an ending for my epic. We continued on our return home, but stopped for a couple days to see Bonnie in Boulder. She introduced us to Nederland, CO which is accessed by a very scenic route called Boulder Canyon Drive (CO119). We hope to take that drive with Bonnie again soon.