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Subject: Postcard

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Day 2 – Phantom Ranch



Breakfast was coffee, orange juice, scrambled eggs, bacon, pancakes and canned peaches. No, the peaches weren't in the can but we could still tell. We sat with Mary Ann, Danette and Danette's daughter Cassie. Mary Ann was talkative and nice and Danette was quiet and nice and Cassie was a teenager. Her eyes said "I am killing you if you make me speak". We chose life.

At another table (you can see them in the corner of the picture) were our neighbors from cabin 7 (we were in 6), Bob from Montana and his daughter Alison (or could be Allison but we'll go with one L) from New York City. They booked two nights and spent the free day playing cribbage so Bob could recover for his trip up. There was just a whole lot of Bob to get up that hill.

Our plan for day two was to explore the bottom of Grand Canyon. As we discovered, the bottom is the river. So exploring means hiking up and down. OK. We took the Clear Creek trail to some overlooks.



Yucca's blooming. We are sneezing.

When we got to the first overlook we could see Phantom Ranch framed between bends in Bright Angel Creek and canyon walls.



A short distance farther brought views of: the Colorado in both directions, the black bridge, and the tortuous (or is it torturous?) switchbacks of South Kaibab Trail.



This is The Colorado. East.

Then we were back at our cabin and it was only 10:00. We took a SELP break. S is for Stretch, E is for Eat, L is for Lotion (like sunblock), and P is for, well, you know what P is for. We truly believe God helps hikers who selp themselves.



Feeling way too spunky, we decided to hike some more and we took the River Trail. So, it was across the silver bridge, along the cliff (up then down, of course), and back over the black bridge.

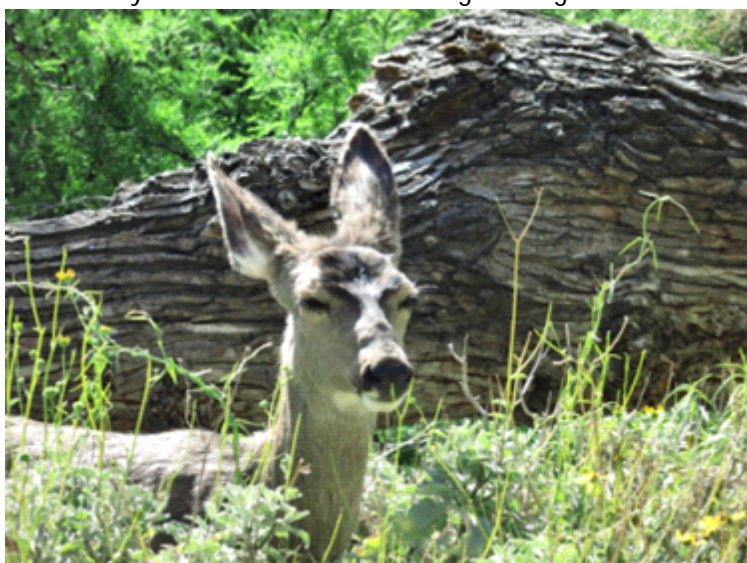


Nice views. Careful where you step. This is the trail the mules use between bridges. And they use it a lot.



This is the black bridge. The silver bridge has a see-through grate for a floor, sort of an accidentally built-in cattle guard. So all mule traffic goes on this black one.

On the way back we meandered along looking at stuff:





We walked back to the cabin and then took a shower. A shower??? Yep. And in hot water! Not in the cabin, but in a shared facility. While it did nothing for our now noticeably tired legs, it greatly improved our outlook.

We dragged our newly enhanced outlook to the canteen. The canteen is a place to buy a few sundries and snacks and ice cleats and to hang out. And it's where breakfast and dinner are served. Mostly the beer and wine drinkers congregate there, and Bob and Alison who were into their fifth hour of cribbage. We bought t-shirts, postcards, a coffee, a lemonade and a little can of Arnica Muscle Erasing Salve. I know that sounds stupid but Mary Ann from breakfast said it was great.



A smartly dressed lady with a cup of coffee stood in line behind us. We'll call her Leigh Wood. "Don't you have cream or half & half?" The counter attendant politely said she would have to make do with the powdered stuff. Leigh gave her a look that would make Cassie envious.

The canteen is the focal point of Phantom Ranch. Eventually you see everyone – getting water, waiting to eat, buying stuff, sitting on benches hoping for company. They are hikers, rafters, mule riders, mule and river guides, rangers, campers and staff. They are staying in cabins, dorms and tents. They are young, old, male, female, hardy, frail, happy and not. There is a lot of turnover and many are seen once and forgotten. The guy with the do-rag and Harley shirt was memorable. The sick old lady and her husband were memorable. The Mennonites were memorable. The real standout was the imposing shaved head, scruffy beard guy with sunglasses. We'll call him M. For malevolent. Kind of gave me goose bumps.

Dinner was beef stew etc., etc. I mentioned that dinner was not only identical in every respect to the one we had last night, it was identical to the one we had in 2012. Someone else said it's identical to the one he had in 1997. There you go.

Bedtime came early but sleep was sporadic, as we were

thinking about our job tomorrow and trying to get comfortable on a mini mattress. We were both awake at midnight and got up to stretch. Then we stepped outside and saw so many stars it was stunning. One was a shooting star and two were airplanes but when they had passed there were just a hundred thousand points of light. Thank you. Got some sleep and were ready to go.