

Justyna Ball from 2

Somewhere in Oklahoma, I made this observation in our journal; "If someone has a small car, it is towed behind."

The conclusion: people here do not mess around. The billboards screamed with "Rolexes" and... miniature donkeys. They have vineyards there too as billboards promise "Just like Napa Valley but closer."

We were almost at the end of Oklahoma and had not seen anybody from Massachusetts yet. Roads aren't great, where we come from, we see a lot of "Road work for the next 10 miles," here it's "Keep our Land Grand." At the end of construction it said: "Sorry for the inconvenience," where we come from it would be "drive at your own risk!"

More than several times we were reminded "Keep Oklahoma beautiful." And so we did.

We also left some serious floods in Oklahoma City and later in Amarillo, TX only to find out about them the following day by watching TV in a hotel room.

Best sight so far, Weatherforth, tens of wind turbines. If Germany is leading in the number of wind turbines, Oklahoma must be right after that.

At first, from a distance one looked like a miniature toy, and as we were approaching it, more and more popped up on the horizon. They became larger in scale, enormous; now we were the miniature toy car against the wind turbine forest.

Being under this great impression, I missed the WELCOME TO TEXAS sign, but regardless could tell we were in a different state, from then on the Rest Areas were called "picnic areas."

Soon we got stuck in traffic in Amarillo, listened to some good music on local stations, lots of money gram commercials in Spanish.

For several long minutes we were forced to stare at that tiny door at the back of the 18-wheeler, finally I said, "It's probably to smuggle illegal aliens, that's where they come out." At this point our completely bored daughter, in this very serious voice explained, separating each word, "It's where they put the load into, mother." We looked at the size of the truck and then the size of that tiny door and burst into laughter "Do you know how much time they would need to fill up the whole trailer? And who's retarded?" I responded.

Minutes after a kid from Maryland with an Afro next to us, had hangers up to his roof, probably on the way to college. I suggested to Karolina that she should wave to him one of her hangers, to which she, back then, replied, "That's retarded."

Next was New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, and California.

After two nights at not so nice hotels, our daughter treated us to comfy beds at, what else, Comfort Inn, great breakfast included. Outside the hotel room, a moonlike landscape, I realized how far we were from home.

I was drawn to New Mexico for several reasons, Bill Richardson being one. The state's (Roman Catholic) governor was invited by our daughter's college to speak at her graduation. It was quite a speech, but Richardson himself actually graduated from the college that our son is in.

It was enough coincidences for me to buy his biography. He possesses a quality that our president lacks completely - diplomacy. When asked about the size of Poland, I often explain by comparing it to New Mexico, as they are supposed to be equal. So, I thought I better find out about the stuff that I preach.

Santa Fe's Cathedral Basilica of St Francis of Assisi (first established in 1610) was on our list. Spectacular bronze doors were installed in 1986 on the 100th anniversary of the dedication of the Cathedral, also the year when our son Francis was born. One of the windows on the main street had a nice display of Art of Poland, Polish pottery. Souvenir shops full of Native American art as well as... "Mom, why are there so many Israeli insignia here?" Hmm, that's a good question.

A road north from Santa Fe led us to Ojo Caliente spa hot springs, where besides fancy packages for couples, for \$16 per person from 8am to 10pm you can use 5 different mineral pools; iron pool, soda pool, mud pool, I forgot what pool and arsenic

pool, all sounded so tempting. Temperature ranging from 80-109F. On one side a mountain surrounds the spa. Around the property you are reminded by discrete signs here and there not to talk but *whisper*.

At the heart of the courtyard there is a Lithia spring and historic pump used since the 19th century. Lithium is known to heal depression so the spa residents call it a happy spring. You see a lot of happy people walking around filling jars and plastic containers.

For an extra \$10 you can get relaxation wrap; first they will soak you in geothermal waters, then wrap you into a light cotton blanket, then a wool blanket, which "accelerates the release of toxins from your body." As you lay in this warm relaxing cocoon, Native American flute music is played softly in the background. Other options, body "buffering" with borax crystals, essential oils, lime and tangerine. Sure, whatever, just bring more of that happy water, I'll take anything...

Originally Taos was not a part of our plan but... someone said that the best things in life come unexpected. We actually arrived to Ojo Caliente the previous evening when the sky was getting unpleasantly dark and clouds were gathering above, not a welcoming sign. We needed to look for a hotel and decided to come back the next morning. Taos was recommended although our GPS displayed a 60 mile long route there. But the GPS did not tell us that the first 20 miles were unpaved! Still it was the best route ever... I guess you have to take it at the right time of the day and the season to enjoy all the colors and shades.

Of all shades of brown and red, majestic mountains set against the blues of the sky and disappearing sun. And the only way to tell there must be a homestead somewhere up there is a skinny gate with a driveway a mile long. The sunset was incredible, the evening wind blew and the grass waved, ocean of bright green grass. Somewhere from time to time, a small...junkyard popped up, just so, in the middle of a field. The road was empty; we did not pass a car for miles. It was the most beautiful road. And then we saw it! The Rio Grande Gorge! The next minute we stood 650 feet above it. Breathtaking? You bet! And a very peaceful place. Ever since I watched Western movies, I knew that if I had the chance that I would cross the Rio Grande. See, in the movies, when they crossed it, you knew that they made it. It was always in the movies and that was the thing, the main goal for the guys. Either they were searching for something or chased by someone.

In this beautiful setting, we found Taos. A ski valley, laid back kind of town, with plenty of attractions.

The most popular is probably Taos Pueblo, 150 families living in an adobe community, the oldest continuously inhabited community in the US. The adobe buildings date from 1000 to 1450 A.D., Catholicism is practiced there. You can take a 130 mile long day trip on a train, riding across the Rio Grande on the country's second highest bridge. The main streets of Taos are lined with little shops and galleries that attract tourists all year around.

Best Western treated us to Indian dancing. A typically family-operated business, grandpa on the drums, grandkids and "Jose" performing. The three-year-old sensation drew the most applause.

Picturesque road from Taos continued. Did I mention that we left 440 acres of forest fire behind us?

This time we took a different road back to Albuquerque. Here we were able to put our feet into the Rio Grande, right next to passing rafts. Looking for a shortcut to Ojo Caliente, our GPS directed us to turn right onto the...hanging bridge. And I swear it looked as if it was made of wood or even rope. I wouldn't walk on it, even with a safety net below it, forget driving. The satellite spotted it but did anybody actually come to check it out?

On Thursday, we made it to Arizona, that's where advertisements for casinos, and petrified wood started. After a while I realized that if it weren't for the meteor that hit the area some 20,000 years ago, there wouldn't be anything to show the tourists. And I'm not sure about those dinosaurs in

paper maché. Dinosaur fossils, second after the meteor natural attraction.

In Phoenix, we stayed with Sean, a friend from Massachusetts. Sean had a dog who liked us the first day. The second day the dog changed her mind so when we went for a day trip to Sedona, Jacek went to some fancy shmancy dog store and bought gourmet dog biscuits to bribe the dog. He bought us ice cream.

Sedona did not impress me maybe because it is, for my taste, too commercialized. The Red Rock's natural beauty is without a doubt beautiful, but too many people want to make a buck off of it, an allegedly highly spiritual place. But why, why, why, all those Tommy Hilfiger, Gap and Ann Taylor shops there? The great idea? mist-ers... a misting system above your head, as you walk from one ridiculously expensive store to another. On a hot day, a life saver.

The road to Sedona was terrible, the height, the traffic, the way back just as bad. That evening in Phoenix, I visited my childhood friend. We had not seen each other since 1985. She and her sisters all settled in Arizona, I moved to Massachusetts. I was hoping that after all those years, she was fat and ugly. No such luck, she was fit and gorgeous... But the dog biscuits worked and we did not leave any disasters this time.

In order to make it to California according to schedule, I had to MISS THE PRESSCOT RODEO!!!! I can't believe they did this to me! The country's oldest!! I was by myself against two maniacs; they made me chose between the rodeo and the Grand Canyon!

So we got back on the highway, driving Historic Rte 66 for a while, a cardboard cutout of James Dean on the left, the Roadkill Café on the right. Passing through Indian reservations, wild horses, cattle, a man on a motorcycle "On the way to LA", finally... the Joshua Tree Forest.

We entered the holy land of the Hualapai Tribe. The Grand Canyon and the Skywalk was next... □

Profiles - Łukasiewicz from 2

Only a few months later the City Hospital in Lwów became the first in the world to receive complete kerosene lighting. This was the first practical application of the new source of light and the beginning of the oil industry, not only in Poland, but in the whole world.

Ignacy became an instant success. He opened the first oil distillery, and in 1854 Łukasiewicz drilled the first oil well. The site of the oil well was in a little town called Bobrka.

Today, Bobrka, which had the first oil well in the world, is an open-air museum. All of this happened in Poland five years before the first oil well was drilled in the United States. □

American Airmen from 1

Author's Footnote: 2nd Lt. Alfred R. Lea was wounded in the leg while participating with the partisan Zenon unit in attacks on the rear of the German Wehrmacht fighting the advancing Red Army. In what must be the most unusual circumstance for a USAAF aviator, he was awarded the Purple Heart medal for his wound received in action as a temporary member of the Polish Partisan 34th Infantry Regiment, AK. Alfred Lea resides in Houston, Texas.

On Sunday, July 9, 2000 Commander Stanley Golanka - United States Navy, representing the US Embassy in Warsaw, unveiled the memorial, honoring the 41,802 American airmen killed in the liberation of Europe.

Marek Ambroziewicz, the chairman of the American memorial committee and a member of the "Zenon" Partisan Unit of the 34th Infantry Regiment, AK, addresses the audience after the Polish Air Force band played the American and Polish national anthems and the PAF honor guard fired a salute to the fallen airmen. □

Music News from 3

für Musik in Cologne, Germany, is also a noted pianist and author of several books, including a two-volume biography of Witold Lutoslawski, and a world-famous biography of Dmitri Shostakovich. During this year's Paderewski Lecture-Recital, Mr. Meyer will not only speak about his compositions but also perform his Piano Sonata Op. 5. Both events-the Paderewski monument unveiling and the concert that follows-are free and open to the public.

November is the month when we observe Poland's Independence Day and also gather to celebrate the great legacy of modern Polish theatre. Gospels of Childhood-an extraordinary theatrical event presented by Teatr Zar-will be on stage as a part of the UCLA's International Theatre Festival. Several performances are scheduled at the Freud Playhouse from November 27 until December 2. Under the direction of Jarosław Fret, Gospels of Childhood is a spectacle of great acting and emotional power, likely to leave unforgettable impression on the entire audience.

Please mark your calendars to include all these events on your "must-do" list. Consider inviting your non-Polish friends and neighbors as well. There is no better way to express your support and pride in our shared heritage than to contribute in person and in deed to the rich harvest of Polish music and culture on display throughout California this fall. □

Taxes from 3

for this greater perceived risk, conventional mortgage lenders generally require you to purchase PMI. Those lenders who do not require PMI will compensate for their risk in other ways, such as raising your mortgage's interest rate.

On the plus side, a conventional mortgage with PMI may enable you to acquire a home that is otherwise outside your budget. On the other hand, the availability of PMI may entice you to purchase a home that is more expensive than you can realistically afford. Consider also that PMI premiums add an extra cost to your monthly house payment, and they are tax-deductible in 2007 only.

So if you're looking to finance that dream home, be sure to consider all the factors, including PMI.

If you have additional questions about the ideas mentioned here and/or the many other strategies available to you, they may be directed to me at 800-CPA-KROL (272-5765), or you may write to:

News of Polonia
Your tax and Financial Matters
2245 E. Colorado Blvd. 104/177
Pasadena, CA 91107
Fax: (626) 449-3331 □

Please support the businesses
that advertise
in the
News of Polonia
They help our Community