



## A TALE OF TWO (VERY DIFFERENT) CITIES

### SEDONA-VEGAS TRIP ~ SEPTEMBER 14-27, 2019

By Cindy Crane



~ **Saturday, 9/14/19.** Cindy & Eddie left Marco Island @ 8am after picking up Cathy. We had an uneventful trip to the Ft. Myers airport, an easy check-in, and then we traveled on our first leg of the trip...to Baltimore. As we sat @ the Firkin & Flyer Restaurant having a huge lunch, we realized that after traveling half a day, we were farther away from Sedona than when we started! We had another very long plane ride to Phoenix. Eddie and I each luckily got aisle seats, but Eddie had a little kid next to him who talked the entire time, and his father in the window seat got up to go to the bathroom at least 10 times! We arrived at Phoenix around 6pm, retrieved our luggage, and got to the rental car place with no problems. Here begins the trip from hell!

After finally getting out of Phoenix, there was a huge storm with thunder, lightning, and heavy rain as we drove north on Rt. 17 (the ONLY way to get to Sedona). Eddie was having a hard time seeing the road to drive and then we saw a sign saying that there was an accident involving fire and the highway was closed. Sure enough we soon came to an absolute stop. There was no way to get off the road as this highway goes through a canyon with mountains on either side and no other roads heading north. We waited and waited, inching forward a little. Finally, we saw an off ramp which we took. At the bottom, we went across the street to the on ramp and once again rejoined the stopped traffic. This got us ahead of about 100 cars, but we were still stuck in the traffic. We finally came upon an accident...not the original one, but one where several cars didn't stop in time and crashed into each other. Car parts littered the highway, but we got around it. After quite a lot of time, we finally came upon the original accident and it was extremely bad. The car was on its side and was completely torched and destroyed. I



don't think anyone survived this one! After quite a while, we managed to get ahead of this and then it was smooth sailing on to Sedona where we arrived at our condo at **Sedona Springs Resort** around 10pm local time...1am for us! We checked in and since there was not one restaurant open at this hour, we went to Basha's grocery store, where we got supplies and a frozen pizza which we cooked for a late dinner. We were all exhausted so we retired to bed.

~ **Sunday, 9/15/19.** After a nice breakfast at the condo drove to downtown Sedona to begin Ed's introduction to this wonderful place. Cathy has been here at least 10 times and this is Cindy's third time, but it's Eddie's first glimpse of Sedona. We started off our day at the Chamber of Commerce for reading materials, then we walked up one side of the street, checking out many cute stores. Our delicious lunch was at the **Cowboy Club**, the famous restaurant where many movie stars of westerns have eaten. We enjoyed fried cactus and bison burgers.





After lunch, we came back home for a little rest and then we went over to visit with Fred Shinn and Terrie Frankel at Terrie's amazing home, the iconic **House of Seven Arches**, once owned by Lucille Ball. What an amazing evening we had! Terrie was such a gracious hostess and they served us drinks, delicious food, and even gave us a full tour of the home which was chock-full of memorabilia from her past life as a Double Mint Twin with her sister, Jennie. Terrie really had an interesting past in Hollywood and she is still quite active writing music, books, and working in the movie and tv industries. The house is amazing and has the absolute best views of Sedona and the beautiful red rocks of Oak Creek Canyon. Fred once lived in Marco Island with his wife Joy where they were quite active with the Marco Film Festival, the Marco Players, and the History museum. He and Joy moved to Sedona in 2004. Sadly, Joy passed away several years ago.

Fred shared so many interesting stories of his youth, growing up alone after his father died and then his mother left him when he was only 12 years old to take care of his one-year and two-year old brothers. The boys were put into an orphanage and the two younger brothers were quickly adopted. Fred ran away for a while and came back to his original home, the trailer park in Wales, Florida, where he lived alone and made his way in the world. He was a busboy at a place in Michigan one summer where he met Joy, proposed two months later and was married to her for 53 years. Terrie said she had been married not 53 years, but 53 times!

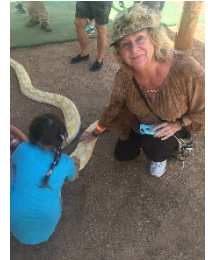


~ **Monday, 9/16/19.** After breakfast, we drove up to Jerome another lovely little old ghost town in the mountains, once famous for mining, now famous for great art and jewelry. On the way up to Jerome, there was another big thunder storm and we even got lots of rain and hail. Funny, but all the shopkeepers told us that they had been suffering a terrible drought all summer and now we



were finally getting rain. We did lots of shopping in this lovely little town. Ed bought a kaleidoscope in the store where Cathy purchased hers several years ago. We look the scary drive up to **The Asylum**, an excellent restaurant right in the old hospital building on the top of the mountain. We enjoyed great drinks, great food, and excellent views! After lunch, we had a nice drive back to Sedona where we caught the happy hour at the airport restaurant called Mesa Grill. Here Eddie, skeptical as he is, experienced a vortex of sorts as his beer jumped out of his glass! Next we drove over to Tlaquepaque, where we browsed through several great stores and galleries. Love the artwork in this place!! We ended up at El Rincon, where we enjoyed an excellent free concert with flamingo, bossanova, salsa, French, and jazz music. Right next door in the patio area there was a dress rehearsal of the play "A Midsummer Night's Dream" which will be performed the next two nights. We walked over to Oak Creek Brewery and Grill for a late-night snack.

~ **Tuesday, 9/17/19.** This morning we slept in late and had another nice breakfast before we drove to **Out of Africa.** This is a wonderful animal preserve in the middle of the Verde Valley area. We had a fun day with a safari ride where we got to feed the giraffe celery from our lips. The safari ride was very dusty and hot and reminded me a lot of being on safari in Africa. We saw the tiger splash show and the large-raptor show where Cindy and Eddie got to pet Oriana, a huge boa constrictor. Finally, we saw the lion show at the pool.



Next we stopped at **Alcantara Winery** for a nice wine tasting before heading back to Sedona. After getting cleaned up we tried to go to Mariposa for cocktails and the view, but we could not get a parking spot, so instead, we drove over to the Javelina Cantina, a great Mexican restaurant where we had so much food that we took half of it home for another night's dinner.



~ **Wednesday, 9/18/19.** Today we had another great adventure! We left the condo at 8am and drove up to the **Grand Canyon.** We stopped at a McDonalds for breakfast and bathroom break once we arrived in the park. This was an absolutely beautiful day-sunny and breezy. We parked our car and walked to where we started our tour of the South Rim of the park on the Red Line buses. We stopped at all 10 outlooks including Hermit's Rest where we enjoyed an ice cream at the end of the day. The Grand Canyon is amazing...truly one of the wonders of the world! Photos just don't do it justice. After an exhilarating day, we drove back home to Sedona and went to Oak Creek Brewery for some beer, tacos, and nachos. This was a great local's hangout and the place where they actually brew the beer that is served at their restaurant in Tlaquepaque. After happy hour, we came back to the condo and enjoyed leftover Mexican food from Javelina Cantina. We watched a program on PBS about country music.

~**Thursday, 9/19/19.** This morning after breakfast we drove to **Cathedral of the Holy Cross,** the very beautiful church which is built right out of the red rocks. The giant cross inside is spectacular. Our next stop was **Bell Rock** where Eddie and Cindy hiked for about an hour. It was quite hot and we didn't make it all the way to the vortex area. Then we drove over to Fred's house where he graciously gave us a quick tour. His home is very special...it looks like an art museum with all of his collections, starting with his Revolutionary War memorabilia, his many Indian statues and artwork, his carved birds, and many other whimsical pieces of art. We loved his two waterfall fountain areas he made in the back yard. Views from his home were also spectacular. After







our visit we drove over to Boynton Canyon to Enchantment Resort where we enjoyed a delicious lunch at Tii Gave Restaurant. Eddie had a brisket burger and Cindy had a cheese stuffed, bacon wrapped hotdog...very filling! Out on the patio, we saw **Kachina Woman**, but we didn't do the climb. Eddie was too tired, and Cindy's foot was not good.



Instead, we drove to **Amitabha Stupa**. Eddie and Cindy walked up into this very special place where people come to meditate and worship among nature at the stupa. We



drove back to the condo for a quick nap before meeting up with Fred and Terrie at **89 Steak House**. We had nice happy hour drinks and met the owner Dieter and had photos outside in front of his beautiful car. Then Terrie showed us through her new commercial property she just bought. We said good night to Fred & Terrie and then went back downtown and had drinks at the Cowboy Club.



~ **Friday, 9/20/19**. This morning we drove over to have breakfast at The Coffeepot Restaurant, but it was crazy busy with no place to park, so we went instead to Sedona Bakery and had a nice breakfast of omelets and bagels and bought more bagels to take home for tomorrow's breakfast. Then we drove over to **Red Rock Crossing** where we walked the trail to Buddha Beach. Ed and Cindy walked further along the stream until we could see Cathedral Rock.



Cindy made 3 small cairns for Cindy, Eddie, and Tonya. We walked back



towards where Cathy was waiting, getting many beautiful photos of the red rocks along the way. We stopped to gas up the car and stopped at CVS for some supplies, then went over to Expressions Art Gallery. This is a very beautiful place but too expensive for us, so on to Tlaquepaque for some real shopping. Cindy and Cathy both did very well in the jewelry stores. It was now time for another visit to Oak Creek Brewery and Grill for happy hour and snacks, then home for a little rest and packing. Dinner tonight was at Picazza...delicious salad and pizza.

~ **Saturday, 9/21/19**. This morning we had a quick breakfast, finished packing, and began the drive to Las Vegas. Sedona has been wonderful! Eddie did a great job of driving from Sedona to Vegas. It took about 5 hours and we didn't have any storms to contend with. We stopped in Kingman at the Wendy's for a nice lunch and finally arrived at the Wyndham Desert Resort. We have a beautiful suite on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor with views of the Big Roller, Stratosphere, Mirage, Bally, and Caesar's Palace. We unpacked and took the free shuttlebus to Harrah's and began our tour of the Strip. We saw the water show at the **Bellagio**, then went inside to view their amazing garden display which was "**Indian Summer**". We walked through several other casinos and ended up at the Miracle Mile. Dinner was at Flights where we had their special-burger and beer for \$10. While here we saw the thunderstorm show and then walked home...exhausted but happy.



~ **Sunday, 9/22/19.** This morning we went to the 90-minute presentation from Wyndham Resorts. The sales guy was not too aggressive and we didn't buy anything, but we got 3 free tickets to see "Love, The Beatles Show by Cirque de Soleil @ the Mirage. Sweet deal!! Next we started today's tour by going on the shuttle bus to Harrah's again. We walked over to the Mirage and picked up our tickets for the Love Show, then walked over to Caesar's Palace to pick up our tickets for the Rod Stewart Show which Cindy had booked online a few months ago. While in Caesar's we saw the Atlantis show while we ate lunch @ Fat Tuesday's. Next we walked to Miracle Mile and got tickets for the 7pm show at Stax theatre called "Vegas, the Show". We had margaritas at Salsa Cantina then on to the 7pm show, which was very entertaining. After the show we got some ice cream and then walked back home.

~ **Monday, 9/23/19.** After a late breakfast, we drove over to **Hoover Dam**. Eddie was quite excited about today's tour. We bought the great Dam Tour and went down inside of the actual



dam about half way down where you could stick your hand out of one of the air vents. The entire tour was very educational and both the dam and the newer huge bridge were very impressive.



After our day at the dam, we drove back to Vegas and went to **The Strat** and their **107 Sky Lounge** for happy hour drinks and delicious appetizers while we enjoyed the views of Vegas. We went up to the 108<sup>th</sup> floor observation lounge, but the thrill rides were all cancelled due to wind and lightning. Next we drove over to **Fremont Street** for the Downtown Experience. It was a little crazy and very loud. Eddie thought it was not "as classy" as Key West Fantasy Fest. There were two different ziplines above and, on the hour, they played music with the projections on the overhead screen. (No one actually seems to see the sky in Vegas as most of the casino/resorts have covered ceilings that are painted to look like the sky.) The funniest thing was a restaurant called **Heart Attack Grill**. If you weighed over 350 pounds, you ate for free. Everyone had to wear a hospital gown and the waitresses were all dressed as nurses. One of the nurses was spanking several of the guys there. (They



must have been bad!!) There was a midget waitress as well. By now we were very tired, so we went back to the Wyndham.



~ **Tuesday, 9/24/19.** Cathy slept late today. Cindy & Eddie drove over to Tropicana and began our tour of the lower Strip. We walked through **MGM Grand** then over the street to **New York New York**; walked past **Excalibur**, took the tram

to Mandalay Bay and walked through there. The tram to **Luxor** was closed so we walked by it for photos and then back to Tropicana where we purchased tickets for Thursday's performance of Purple Reign. Next we found a gas station to fill up and decided to find some lunch. Eddie tried to find Backyard BBQ on E. Reno Drive...this was a complete fiasco as we drove to the address, finally found it, but it was not a





restaurant. Ed even called it, but no answer. Finally, Cindy found a Steak & Shake in the OYO casino. We had some great burgers, then headed back to the Wyndham. We got cleaned up and then all went to The Strip by our shuttle bus to Harrah's. We walked through The Venetian, which was very beautiful, and then in to Caesar's Palace and to Trevi's for happy hour. We had delicious drinks and appetizers. Our show tonight was **Rod Stewart** in the **Coliseum at Caesar's**. The show was very good and Rod sounded great for a 75-year-old!

~ **Wednesday, 9/25/19.** Today we all slept in late and after breakfast, we drove over and tried to find free parking at the Flamingo. But this didn't work, so we came back, took the shuttle bus to Harrah's and then finished our tour of the upper Strip. We walked through The Venetian, The Palazzo, The Wynn, and Encore. These are all very beautiful resorts, each with a different decoration theme.



Cathy and Cindy had gelato at The Venetian. Cathy stopped and signed up for the Caesar's special credit card in order to get lots of perks. We searched until we found **Trustworthy Brewery**, where Eddie had a flight of draft beers. Then we went back to **The Venetian** and **Mercado Della Pescheri** for their great happy hour. We had Cosmos, Lemon-drop martinis, and Mojitos along

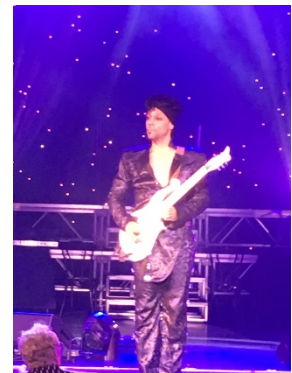


with three great appetizers. The opera singers gave a performance while we were there. We all three love the Venetian...it is magical. Next we enjoyed a leisurely walk over to the Mirage where we had tickets for "**Love, the Beatles**" by **Cirque Soleil**. What a fabulous show...the best I have seen. We all really loved it and our seats were the very best because we were up high and could see everything, even the

acrobats and high flyers who came down from the ceiling. After the show, we walked over to see the volcano show in front of the Mirage and then walked back to The Linq where we had a drink at Numb Bar then listened to the Dueling Twins @ the Piano Bar. Next we went for our fabulous ride on the Big Roller. What great views of all of Las Vegas while we took the 30-minute ride. We walked home and had a nightcap, while watching a little of "A Star Is Born". We got to bed around 1am.



~ **Thursday, 9/26/19.** This morning we all slept in late, had a little breakfast, and packed a little. This afternoon we took the car over to the Miracle Miles shops where we found free valet parking, walked around there for a while, then walked over to The Cosmopolitan, Aria, and two beautiful art galleries. We had a late lunch back At Miracle Mile @ Ocean One where all meals were \$5 and you got 3 cocktails for \$10. We went back to the condo for a little nap then drove back over to Tropicana. We walked over to MGM Grand and to The Crush Bar where we shared a flatbread pizza and had cocktails. Then we walked back to The Tropicana and the very long wait for the **Purple Reign Concert**. Cindy even played the slots for a while, but lost all of her money quickly. We finally got into the theater and the usher put us way down in the front of the orchestra instead of high up in the mezzanine. The theatre was nowhere close to full. Cindy loved the concert,



Eddie was so-so, and Cathy didn't like the music. We got home very late, did some last-minute packing while having a wine nightcap. Once again, we got in bed around 1am.

~ **Friday, 9/27/19.** We had planned to get up @ 6:45am, but the sound was turned off on Eddie's phone alarm. Cindy was having a bad nightmare and awoke at 7am. Luckily, we had almost everything packed and we quickly finished and left the condo @ 7:25am. We made it to the airport, the car rental return, and through security with no problems. Our flight from Las Vegas to St. Louis and the last flight to Ft. Myers were all uneventful, as was the drive back to beautiful Marco Island.

One thing I have to say about Vegas. It is a fun place with lots of excitement, but it is a horrible place to drive a car. There is absolutely no signage and so much traffic that it was very nerve-wracking for Eddie this week.

All in all, it has been an excellent vacation! Cathy and Cindy got to enjoy two of their favorite places again and really enjoyed sharing them with Eddie. Eddie really liked Sedona and kept talking about becoming a sort of "snowbird"-living part time in Sedona. He was impressed with the scenery, the weather, and the small-town feel of the place, so much like Marco. Eddie was impressed with Vegas and the beautiful buildings and architecture. But as I said, the driving there was terrible. A fun place to visit, but I don't think we would ever want to live there.

