

Trip 2 – Episode #44 – Getting Our Kicks on Route 66

We were heading east, toward the California border. Still seeing amazing sights along the way...



But, we're getting to the point where we have to make choices. The reality we're coming to terms with is this: You Can't See Everything.

We have a deadline by which we have to be home. And we have some "must-sees" and some "maybes", and we have to decide which maybes we're going to see now and which will go on the "maybe next time" list.

As we drove east, we finally decided that Las Vegas, which neither of us had ever been to, would be a maybe next time. Neither of us really felt a desperate need to go there. I knew I'd be put off by the over-the-top-ness of it, and saddened by all the people spending money they didn't have in the hope of striking it rich.

Other stops had been struck off the list because it's still too cold: Zion National Park in Utah, Santa Fe (which was still going down below zero at night), Taos...



The must-see list included Sedona and the Grand Canyon. Even if we were going to freeze, we didn't care!

Another thing Jim was keen on, and which was on our way, was to drive some of the legendary Route 66.

If you're like me, you know Route 66 is significant, and that you can get your kicks there, but maybe not why.

So I looked it up and discovered that, as the first highway linking the rest of the US to the Pacific, it "symbolized the new optimism that pervaded the nation's postwar economic recovery."

The thing is ... Route 66 doesn't actually exist anymore. It was decommissioned in 1985 and now only parts of it are still drivable. However, because the highway "has become a symbol of the American people's heritage of travel and their legacy of seeking a better life," the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program was established, to preserve or maintain the road and some of the structures and features along its path.

Fortunately, we found out there was a museum very near the beginning of our journey along Route 66. The difficulty we had in getting to it should have been an omen.



But finally we got there.



It was full of information and photos and videos about the legendary route, and the era it represented.





And of course all kinds of stuff to buy.



Including a guide as to what was ahead of us – driving from Barstow and toward Needles. Looking closely we noticed that a significant portion was closed. Hmmm...



Off we went. And now Jim was really in the spirit, with his cool new purchase.



The first bit wasn't too encouraging.



Every so often, there was a reminder that we were driving the historic road.



But we couldn't help noticing, as we were driving the 35mph speed limit on the historic road, that just over to the right of us was Hwy 40, where people were driving 65 mph. And getting exactly the same view. Hmmm...



But at least we had the road to ourselves.

Finally, we found something that really said "Route 66". Actually, it screamed it.



Well, we were kind of hungry anyway, and Jim was appropriately dressed for it, so ...

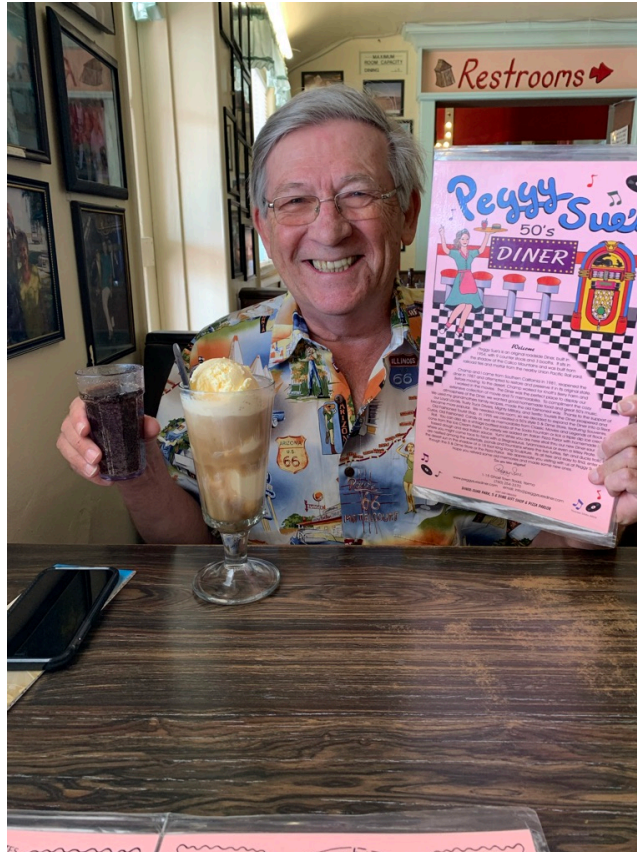


It was a hoot. Boasting 7 dining rooms, all with different themes, Peggy Sue's Diner was a definite throw-back.





Keeping in the spirit of the day, Jim of course went for the root beer float.



I had a fun surprise when I went into the washroom (or restroom as they say in the US). I wondered how many women screamed and walked out, assuming they'd entered the wrong room by mistake.



It was fun, and we came out feeling like we'd just had lunch with Richie Cunningham and The Fonz. We were ready to get back to the legendary route.

But then what we saw was this...



And this...



And more of
the same...



We were still
traveling at 35
mph, and
vehicles were
still whizzing
along on Hwy 40,
only now it was
on the other side
of us.



Jim and I looked at each other and agreed that we'd had enough kicks on Route 66. At the next exit, we left the historic road, aimed Charles at Hwy 40 and let him rip.



As a person who appreciates the importance of preserving our past, I applaud the goals of the preservation program. But I couldn't help feeling that it was more about the myth of Route 66 than the reality. Much like Tombstone was an exaggerated glorification of the American wild west as it never really existed. It's about what people want us to believe, not necessarily what is or was.

The feeling was reinforced by the RV park we'd booked.

Listed in one of our RV apps, "Arabian RV Oasis" sounded heavenly.

But when we got there, this is what we found. One of the saddest, ugliest parks of our trip.



But we were glad we had driven on Route 66. To say that we'd done it.
And of course, because of this...

