

### Trip # 6 – Episode 3: Welcome to 2024

We had a lovely Christmas catching up with family and friends. One of the great gifts we got was this magnetic sign that we can attach to Charles as we travel.

For those readers who are slightly younger and/or never watched the CBS Evening News in the 70s, our RV Charles is named after Charles Kuralt who traveled around America finding interesting stories about people and places he discovered “On The Road”. Our sister-in-law Jayne had this sign created in the same style as the logo for Charles’ reports for the CBS Evening News.



On New Year’s Eve, we flew back to Tampa Airport... where we were greeted by their giant flamingo. First time we’d seen that. It’s pretty great.

And we got there in time to bring in the New Year with family there.



On New Year's morning, cousin Diane had made sure to have a loaf of the special Greek New Year's pita (bread).

The tradition is that there is a coin baked into the bread. You cut a slice for each member of the family, and whoever finds the coin in their slice of bread will have a year of good luck.

It seems unfair that I should get the slice with the coin in it. How could I be any luckier?



After another good visit with our cousins, we hit the road again, heading south to (we hoped) warmer, sunnier climes.



One of things we always look forward to on our travels is the unusual signs we see along the way. And on our first day, we saw some great ones.

Fortunately, we weren't there on a Saturday, so we missed the special BBQ.



Is it just us or is this kind of confusing? Is there a First, Second and Fourth Third Bank? (Actually I checked it out and discovered that there was a Fifth Bank and a Third Bank and they merged, so naturally they became the Fifth Third Bank. Not sure that would inspire confidence in who was handling my money...)



You know, if Ron DeSantis hadn't been so busy running for President, he would've done something about this wouldn't he?



I've seen the word "hammock" used in this way several times in Florida and I thought maybe it had some other meaning. Like maybe a dip in the landscape, or a kind of cove. Nope. It seems a hammock is a hammock, and for some reason this one has a rattlesnake in it. We drove past. Quickly.



In all our travels we have almost never spotted the animal or person or vehicle that is shown on these signs.

Our record continues. We saw not a single panther. Let alone panther traffic.

We eventually got to this sign, which told us we had arrived at our next campsite.



We stayed here for a pleasant but uneventful night. So far, we've found that the Florida State Parks are really well set up and very inexpensive – generally under \$30 U.S. Of course that means they're VERY popular and generally difficult to book at the last minute. So we were lucky to get one night here.

The next day we continued south to an interesting campground south of Naples and near the Everglades, on Chokoloskee Island.



The campground had a pretty close-knit little community of winter residents and avid fishers. It was not exactly what we were used to, but it was open and sunny and near the water which always works for us.

It was a pleasant site, if not overly large and not overly level. One helpful neighbour warned us that we shouldn't have the wheels off the ground. But we know of many other owners of vans like ours who do the same.



Usually we want to be right by the water, but in this case, we were okay with where we were – a few rows back.



However, there were nice views at the campground.





And it was interesting to talk to some of the folks who were just there for the fishing. This guy, Lou, was from upstate New York and was staying for several weeks. All he wanted to do every day was go out in his boat and fish. At least he caught something worth catching. This is an Atlantic Tripletail. Who knew?



The next day, I talked to three guys who had been fishing all day, and were cleaning and filleting the fish at the table right by the water.



They very quickly gathered an audience.



As the fishers went about their business, the pelicans were so attentive, they looked like they were in school, taking notes!



Until one of the fishers threw a morsel their way, and then it was all birds for themselves.



As you can see, the more brash ones would actually stood right beside the guys and tried to grab bits off the table. It was quite an entertaining show, and amazing that they didn't mind at all how close I got to them. Even though I had no fish to offer.



But all good things must come to an end, and as soon as the fishers cleaned and packed up, those pelicans were out here.





And then there were none.



We walked the Chokoloskee neighbourhood a bit, which wasn't exactly glamorous, but it's always nice to see colourful flowers in bloom – especially in January!



And we met some of the neighbours.



We'd seen this store listed on the Google map and thought we'd check it out. But it turned out it wasn't a store. It was a museum of the store that used to be there.



They were very proud of its significance, as this sign between the steps proves.



It was an interesting area, with some fun cafes - but lots of places for sale.

We had a good meal at the Diving Pelican Restaurant, where I wrestled with some delicious snow crab. (Only later did I find out they're in decline because of warmer waters in Alaska.)





We enjoyed our stay on Chokoloskee Island. Any place that offers sights like this are fine by us.



Next stop was another Florida State Park, which we quite enjoyed.



Much like Collier State Park, this one was very jungle-like, but very comfortable.



We went for a nice walk along the Estero River and felt a little like we were in a remake of The African Queen.





It was quite lovely...



Until we saw a sign warning us against going near the water because of ... alligators!



We stayed inland.

And found evidence  
that others had  
travelled this way  
before.

And survived???

We'll never know.



Eventually we came up to this bridge ...



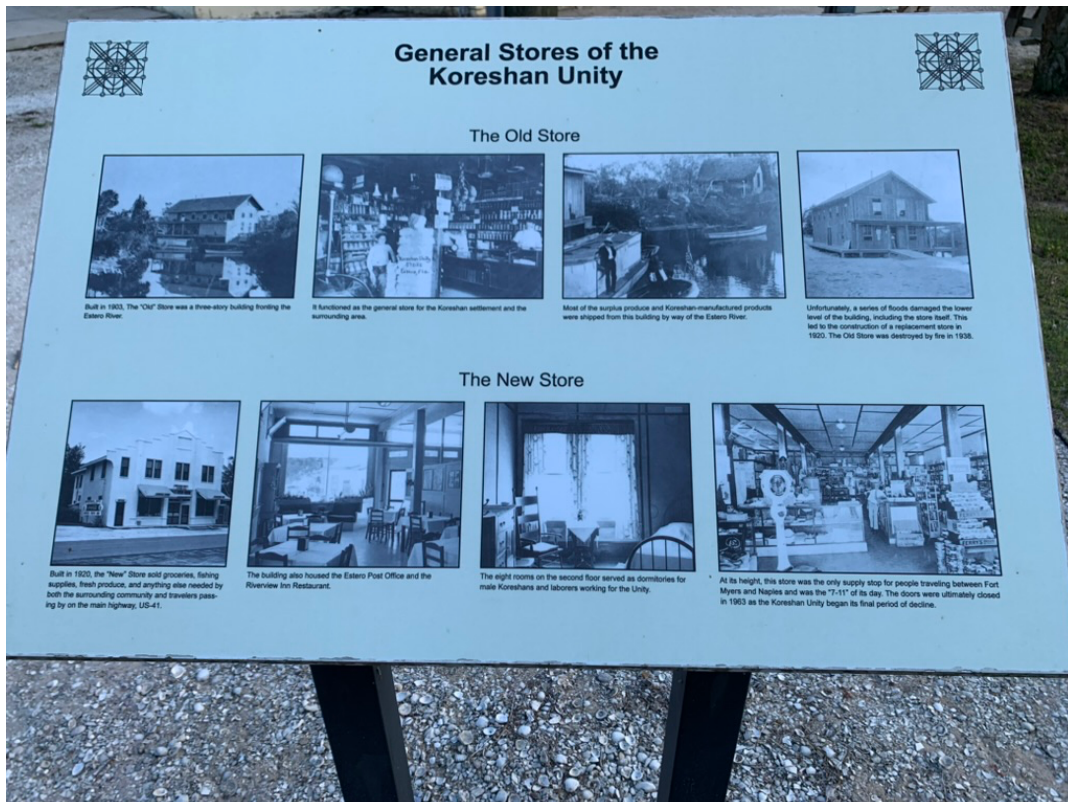
And another...



Without realizing it, we had stumbled onto the Koreshan Historical Site ... which, come to think of it, is generally how we find most of the interesting things during our travels.



The grounds were quite large and included many buildings that were still standing from the original site. At first glance, it looked like an ordinary community...



... With interesting and well-maintained buildings that looked like any normal historical site...



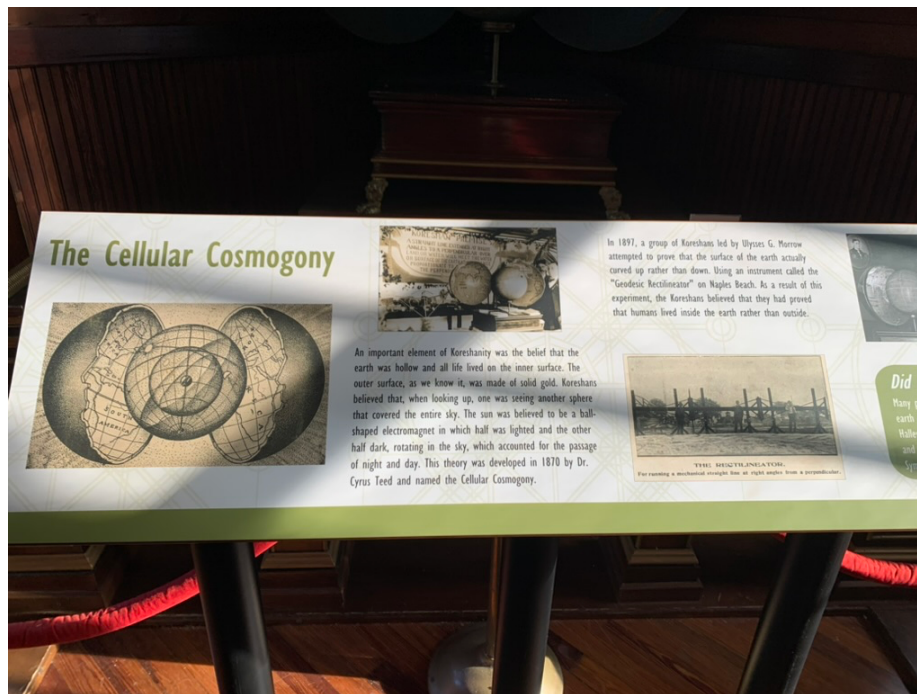
But then, remember ... This is Florida.

There was much more to the story. This site was established back in the 1890s, by Cyrus Reed Teed, a pseudoscientific religious leader and self-proclaimed messiah. He created a community, which grew to a population of over 250, and boasted a bakery, general store, concrete works, power plant, and "World College of Life". They also published their newspaper from the site, called *The Flaming Sword*.





Teed denounced the idea that the Earth revolved around the Sun and instead pioneered his own theory of the Universe, known as the Cellular Cosmogony. According to this theory, human beings live on the inside of the planet, not the outside.



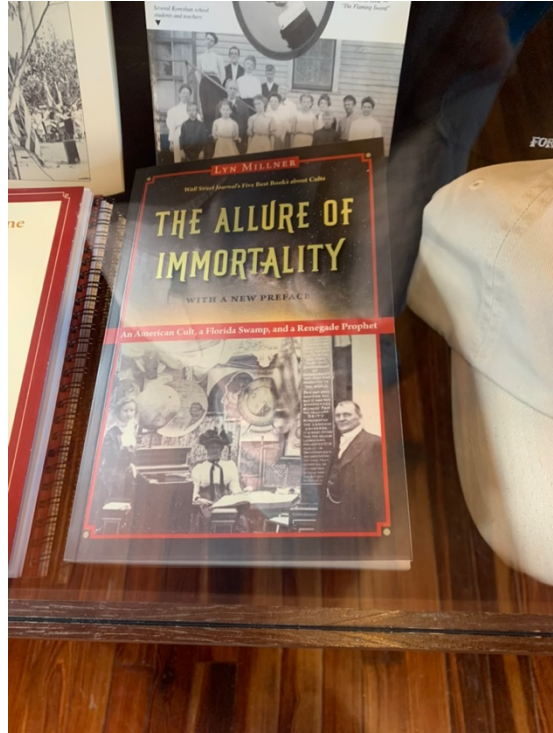
Also, according to Teed, the sun is a giant battery-operated contraption, and the stars mere refractions of its light.



Teed's ideas, called Koreshanity, caught on with others. Koreshanity preached cellular cosmogony, alchemy, reincarnation, immortality, celibacy, communism, and a few other radical ideas. Among his tenets was that maintaining a celibate lifestyle would bring about immortality. He also believed that women were equal to men. Understandably, women found this attractive, and about 75% of the Koreshan population was female. Too bad he was pretty much crazy.

When he died, Teed's followers initially expected him to be resurrected, after which he and his faithful would be taken up to heaven, as he had predicted in his book *The Immortal Manhood*.

Instead of being resurrected, however, Teed began to decay. And after a few days, his followers were forced to give up on him. Eventually the Koreshans declined in number.



You can't help but wonder if they formed the core of current day Floridians, who make so many headlines in stories about people who do incredibly stupid or horrifying things, starting off with "Florida man..." or "Florida woman..."

Fortunately, one of the displays we discovered on the Koreshan site showed us how to get back to our campground, which Jim was able to point out.



We managed to find our way safely back to Charles, happy to return to the real world where the Earth is something we stand on, and the sun is a star that lights up the sky until it sets in the west.

