



The Flyin' Solo VanLife on the Highways and Byways of North America

RICK'S ROADS

Ride Along and Enjoy the People, Places, and Who Knows What



BLOG POST: 2022.08.27-29
Enjoying Weed in northern California



I chose the southern exit when I left Lava Beds National Monument. GooGirl wanted me to go north, all the way back up to the Oregon border, then back southwest. I didn't want to do that; too much construction to get stuck behind, and redundant roads.

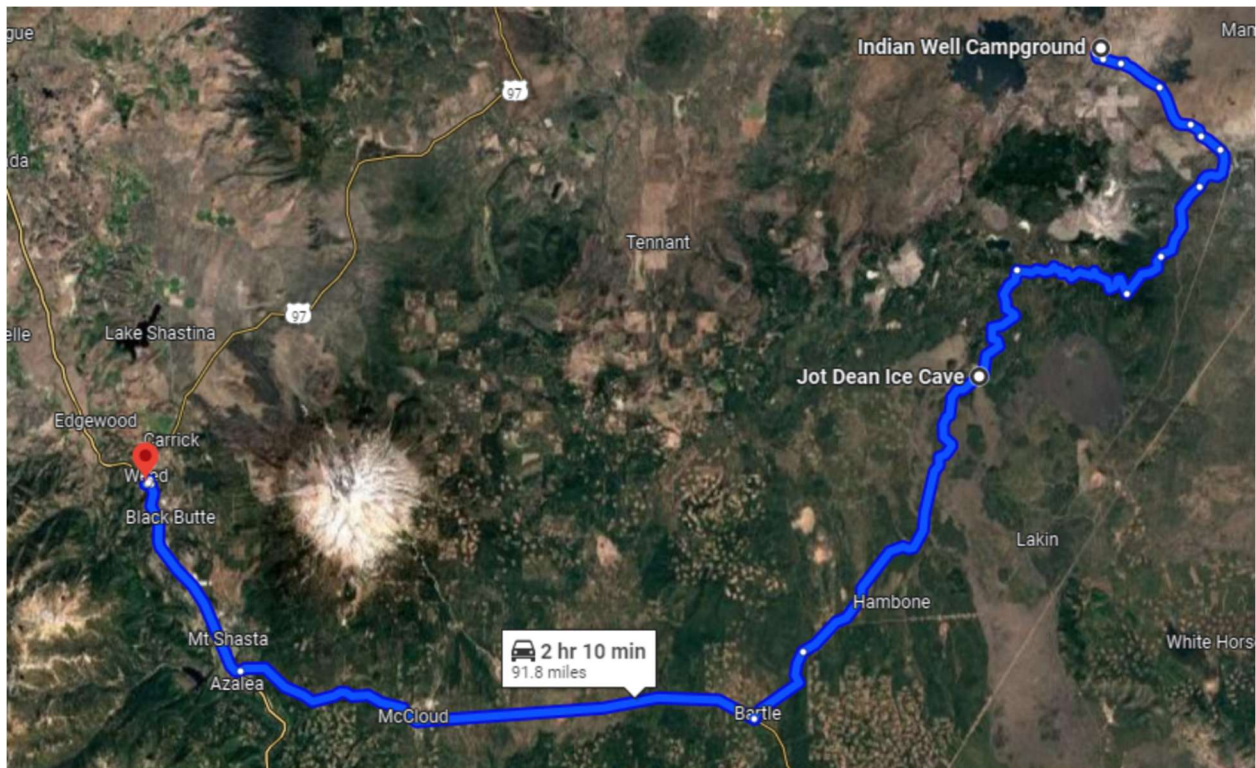
So, I looked at the map, picked a spot to the south that I would pretend I wanted to go to "on the way", and use whatever alternate route she found. GooGirl scrawled out a nice blue line on my screen and began to direct me. Cool! Let's go exploring, Maxx!

But GG had a brain cramp or something and tried very hard to send me up a hiking trail. It may have also served as a Jeep track for wilderness access, but it would have been way too tight a fit for a roadhouse like BM the PM. Besides, there was a cable hung across the entrance so I couldn't have gone up there anyway.

I told GG that I wasn't gonna go that way. (Not that she listened.) She *had* steered me down dirt road shortcuts before with success, (i.e., in North Dakota, to Roosevelt NP), but this time it was the terrain -- not the surface -- that deterred me.

So, I drove right on by. GooGirl was pissed. She told me to pull over at a particular spot and U-turn back to that trail. I drove right on by that particular spot. She picked out another spot and again instructed me to bang a U-ey. I rebelled again and sailed right on past it.

I *insisted* on pavement, so I *persisted* on pavement until she finally got the point and, with what I imagined was an exasperated sigh, she created a new route. I was nervous that she would drive me over a cliff to get revenge, but all was well. It ended up being a great ride.



Driving southeast did seem like an odd way to go southwest, so I knew we'd have to take a right sooner or later. After not too long, we did, onto a narrow (but paved) two-lane road lined on both sides by tall evergreens. We were south of the zone that the Caldwell Fire had scorched, so the forest was green and healthy.

But, mannn, there was **nothing** else on this road. It was not a fast route, either. One curve after another as we slithered up a tall hill for several miles. And the further up we went, the crappier the pavement got. Given the previous misdirection, I wondered where it was going to take me.

After about 8 miles of rattling along this old, beat-up roadway, I saw a two-man County work crew and their pickup truck on the shoulder ahead. I pulled up and asked if this road went anywhere, and if it stayed paved or turned to dirt up ahead.

"Paved all the way," he said, pointing way off into the distance. "Couple miles, go left on the 49 road, and that'll take ya to the 89 road."

I liked the way he called it "the 89 road" instead of "Route 89" or "Rowt 89" or even "highway 89". I had never heard it phrased that way before.

Soon, I came to the T-intersection and turned left. A sign identified this as Medicine Lake Road. And there was a plain white sign with a black "49" on it. OK, the 49 road. Then, I

saw the best sign of the bunch: Volcanic Legacy Scenic Byway. Ohhh yahhh! Scenic Byways work for me!

And work for me it did, for 30 miles. New pavement, beautiful trees, blue sky, bright sun, cool AC, my fave tunes, cruise control at 60 MPH, and *nobody* else on the road. Can't ask for much more.

Then I came to Bartle (see map). It's nice that that junction had a name because there was *nothing* there except more trees and two intersecting roads, one of which was the aforementioned 89 road.

I turned right, and the Volcanic Legacy Scenic Byway turned right with me. Excellent! More awesome byway scenery coming up for almost 30 more miles! Blue Maxx was as delighted with this as I was. (I apologized to GooGirl for doubting her.)



And halfway along the 89 road, I saw this: the peak of Mt. Shasta perfectly centered in the distance. Niiiiice.



The 89 road met I-5 and I rode the Interstate north for about 10 miles to the esteemed town of Weed. In my road-tripping career, I have passed the exit for this town several times. It always made me smile, and often prompted me to, um, make an offering to its spirit. I resolved that I would give it a worthy visit someday.

As soon as I cleared the exit ramp, I was greeted by this sign and the one on page 1.

“I Love Weed.” Ha! Love that shirt. But it needs to be clarified that the Weed Store was not a dispensary. They only sold cheesy souvenirs.



Also, at this junction of roads, there was one that led to the College of the Siskiyous. The other fork takes you downtown.

The small, green arrow signs indicated the choice one must make: Weed this way, and College that way. Perfect symbolism. Or irony. Or ironic symbolism. Anyway, perfect.

I liked the sound of the Art District, so I headed there first. I expected to find a street full of galleries and cool shops and cafes, but it was a dud. Nothing was open, and most had not been open for a long time. I'm sure COVID pulled the rug out from under the small businesses in this small city.

I would imagine that the Arts District relied heavily on people like me: curious and amused tourists, popping in for a look-around and possibly willing to drop a few bucks on a unique souvenir. When the pandemic shut everything down, many of those quaint businesses could not pay the rent, utilities or employees and, sadly, went belly up.

Maxx and I drove past many shuttered, small shops, diners and such in towns and cities all across the country. Sad sights to see. A few years ago, most of them were probably doing OK, maybe even providing a decent living for a family. Now....

Anyway, yes, Weed is a city, not merely a town. Their motto is, "Weed like to welcome you." [Reminder: it's considered rude to groan at a city's motto.] In 2020, the population was 2,862. So, it's not a big place.

Weed was established as a logging community by Abner Weed, who figured out that the strong winds that are common here would be really good for drying wood. In the 1940's, Weed boasted the largest sawmill in the world. How about *that??*



With no cool vibes to be had in the Arts District, I aimed for my Harvest Host for the night: the Mount Shasta Brewing Company (MSBC). Ohhhh, yahhh, I was looking forward to this one.

It was just up the road from the “I Love Weed” sign. It was easy to find anyway, but I would’ve had to be a moron to miss the sign.

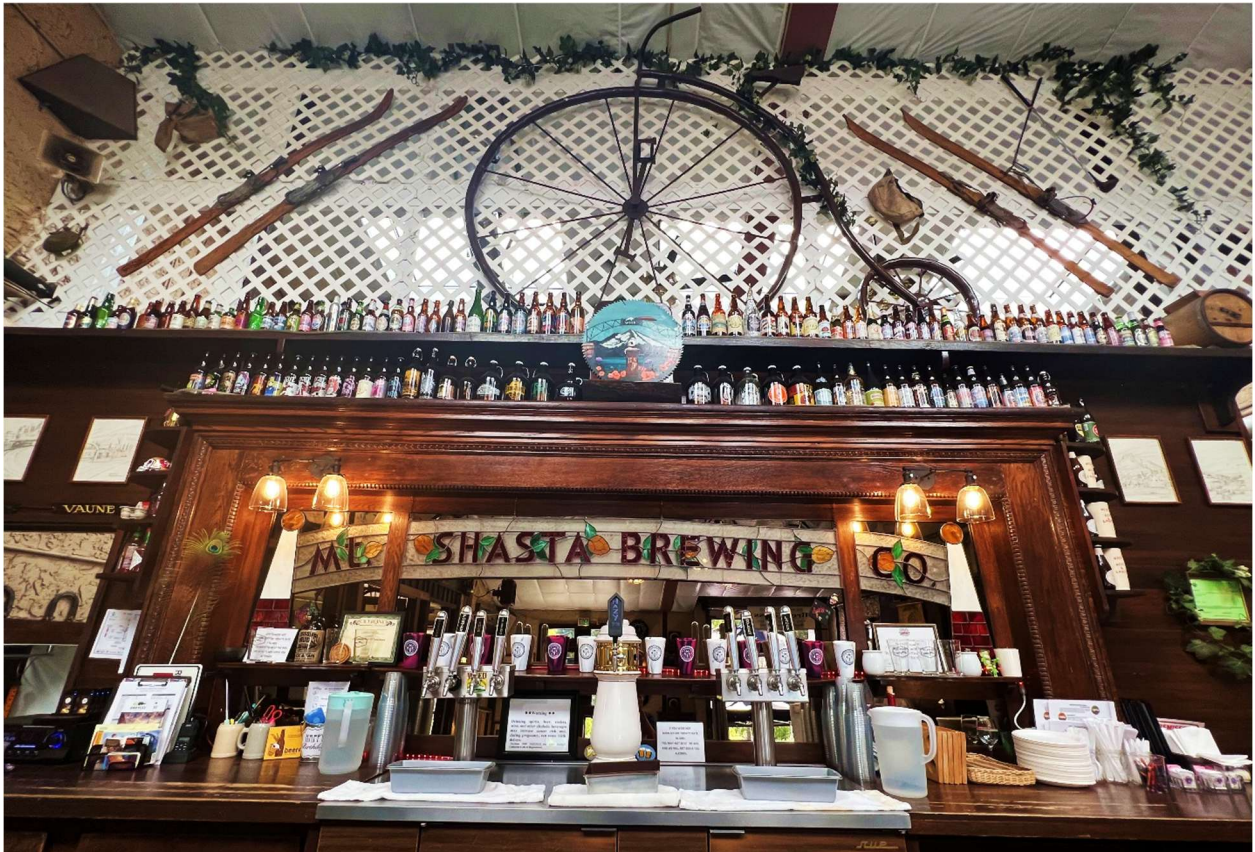
The dedicated HH parking lot was quite large and paved. It was mostly sloped, but I was there early enough to get a fairly level space. A water hose was available for us HH people, but there had been no mention of electricity.

I stepped out of Blue Maxx to look around, and when I *turned* around – wowww! – crazy good view of Mount Shasta. I dare say it made me thirsty. =)



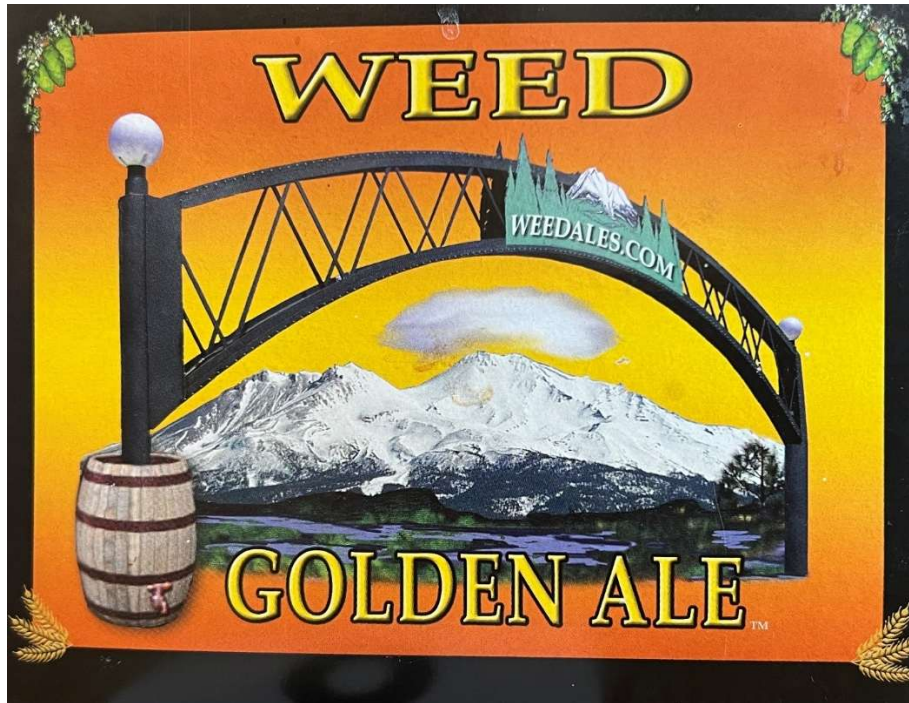
MSBC has been in business since 2009. The brewery itself looked pretty cool to me. There were plenty of colorful signs that said Weed on them, which was giving me kicks. The outside “patio” area had a bit of a junkyard feel, with a stack of cinder blocks on a steel plate serving as a prominent, umm, *sculpture*?

Inside, though, I immediately dug the vibe. A penny-farthing bicycle and two pairs of antique skis hung on the wall over the bar, and four empty burlap marijuana sacks decorated the side wall.









The MSBC is pretty cool. It can hold a lot of people, but very few were here tonight. Must've known I'd be here. I had an IPA (\$6.50) and an Amber Ale (\$6.00), plus a soft pretzel (\$8.50), and hung out for an hour or so at table 8, in the corner, near the door. The tunes were good, the beers were goood, and the pretzel was yum. It was good hang, but I had a ton of photos to edit and get web-ready, so I returned to Blue Maxx to get to the task.

I had a notion that I might stroll back up for a nightcap between 9:00 and 10:00, but I noticed the bar hours posted on the door; they closed at 8:00. Awfully early, it seemed, but, then again, that's 11:00 in (most of) Florida.

The unexpected, **big bonus**, though, was the electric hook-up next to my parking space. I would not have even seen it if the dude parked to my right had not walked over there to toss something in the trash barrel. That drew my eyes to the pole and the water faucet and ... whooaaa, that's an outlet box, iddinit? It sure was, and when I plugged in my cord, it lit up, ready to go. Sweeeet!

So, not only could I charge up all my SGs, but, on this hot summer eveninf, I could run my electric fan full-time. Big bonus, indeed.

Saturday 2022.08.28

I saw a sign on a fence that advertised the "Rollin' In Weed" Car Show. It was taking place today, practically next door to the brewery. It was free to attend, so you know I was all over it.

But first, I took a sightseeing cruise around greater Weed. It was entertaining to see the city's ordinary places, especially the high school, just because the word "Weed" was on the sign. (Though I think the seniors were a year early??)







The Car Show was a hoot. Hundreds of people were there. A lone man with a laptop had the stage to himself as DJ. The Weed HS football team was cookin' up burgers and dogs. There were a few dozen classic old cars and fire engines. Eye-catching and interesting for sure. Bocce, horseshoes, tents of local craftsmen. A splendid time was being had by all.

Of all the tents set up by local/regional vendors, the 3D printer guy (with a business called WTF) had the most eye-catching stuff. The "yard-sale" dude,

though, with the telescope for \$5, the microwave oven for \$5, and the gas-powered mini-go-cart for \$200, had the best bargains.

I did make a purchase: a Thunderbird logo "plate" (plastic) that I will glue on somewhere inside BM. It cost \$1. Plus, I donated \$1 to the event.









Afterwards, I settled the fully-charged-up BM under a shady tree and watched the LLWS US Championship game. Hawaii won, as expected, but Tennessee gave them a decent battle. Tennessee had a kid who only had *vision in one eye!* How the hell can he catch difficult fly balls, and hit fast pitching *with no depth perception??* And he hit a **Grand Salami** in one of their games!! Porter was his last name. My new hero.

Then it was off 11 miles north to Lake Shastina Golf Resort (\$47, but free HH stay). I had the place to myself on this late Saturday afternoon. Beautiful course too!



Mount Shasta towered over several of the fairways, including – not by accident, I’m sure – the long par 5 18th. As daylight waned, the earth’s shadow slowly crept up the mountainside, chasing the rosy hues of the setting sun higher and higher.

And SO MANY DEER! I must have encountered deer on at least half the holes. They are not at all daunted by humans either (at least, not by me). On #5, I hit my shot into the midst of a small herd of about a dozen of them. They didn’t even flinch. One of the does was grazing just inches from where my ball lay. I tried explaining to them, in a calm and friendly way, that I needed to hit my shot from there and I needed a little space. They blank-stared me, silently telling me that they were busy grazing and resting here so would I kindly just fuck off.

But I slowly edged closer, keeping a wary eye on the sharp antlers on the largest buck. They pretty much sighed an “okayyyyyy” and moved a few yards away, but they still had

me hemmed in on three sides. Then they all stopped grazing and stood there watching me. It was as if they wanted to see if this douchebag was any good or not.

I had never hit a shot under such circumstances: a gallery of deer. It was a bit unnerving, but I embraced the notion that they would bring me luck, continued speaking with them right up until my backswing, then locked in and hit a partially-hooded 9-iron through a gap in the tree branches and deftly deposited it on the right side of the green. Easily the best shot I have ever hit with a dozen deer taunting me.

By the time I finished my round, dusk was descending upon the land. I returned my cart – what, you thought I *walked*?? – and sauntered off to Blue Maxx for a serene night's sleep in the parking lot. Gotta love Harvest Hosts.

Sunday 2022.08.29

Weed is a small town, as I've already said, so between Friday afternoon and my Saturday cruise-around, I had seen everything, just about, that it had to offer.

So, I headed back to Bel Air Park. Alas, the "Rollin' in Weed" Car Show turned out to be a one-day event despite what the sign had proclaimed. The park was deserted when I pulled in, but it's a nice restful place, so I parked under a shady tree and worked on some more photos for a while. I take way too many photos, and I get waaayyyy behind in processing them. Ha.

Even in the shade, though, it was still hot. I got out and walked around for a bit, hoping to find a breeze or two. There is a public swimming pool in the park. I saw it yesterday, and I had questioned why such a good-looking pool was idle on such a hot day, and now here it was today, asplash with Weed peeps.





It was very inviting. My body had not had a good cleansing for several days. Last shower was, ummm ... holy crap, it was at Planet Fitness in Eugene *eight days ago*. If there had been any doubt about plunging into that pool, that realization washed it away.

Don't get me wrong, now. In that week, I had done a few roadside/campsite jug showers (pouring the contents of a gallon jug over my head and body) and made use of my Dude Wipes (basically, these are oversized moist towelettes), but I had not had the full and thorough wash that only a full-body dunk can provide.

Hence, towel in hand, I entered the building. A man in his 40's looked up from his little desk in his tiny room, surprised to see

someone. I asked about the price to swim, and he waved me on in. "We're not really open today," he explained, "I just came over so some of the neighborhood parents could bring their kids over for an hour or so." Very nice of him! I thanked him and went in.

I should have known something was up. All the parents were sitting on the far side of the deck, under the big blue shade tents, and the only ones in the pool were kids. One was a junior high boy and everyone else was about 8 or 9. They were all over him like the Lilliputians on Gulliver. He was being good about the abuse though.

I walked to the far corner of the pool to be out of their chaotic way, and I nonchalantly dropped feet-first into the pool. I got chalant right away!

Oh my gawwwwwd! It was freaking **frigid!** I grew up swimming at beaches along the upper Atlantic, happily thrashing about to keep warm in waters that rarely got as warm as 70°, so you'd think I'd have some

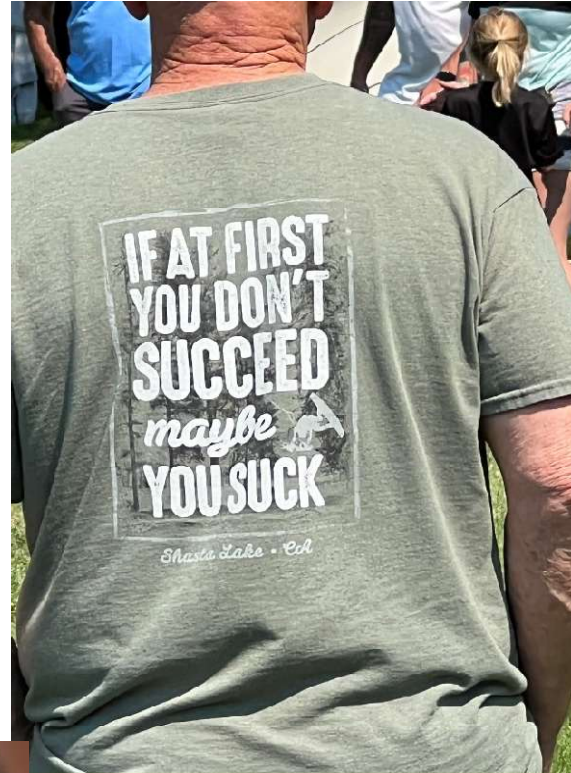


tolerance. *Howevrrrr*, I had spent the last 20 years floating lazily in the womb-ish 85-90° water of the Gulf of Mexico. So it all wore off.

And even in the Keys, swimming pools – at least, the hotel pools that I frequented – were heated. This one was not. It almost felt like it was refrigerated.

The shock of cold on my sun-heated skin took my breath away. I did my best to look like all was hunky and dory, but it was neither. I quickly-but-casually climbed out of the pool and stood in the sunshine for a couple of minutes, thawing out. I do not think anyone even saw me arrive, let alone hop in and right back out.

But, soon, armed with a revised expectation about the sensation, I went to the ladder and climbed back in. It was still cold but knowing that in advance makes such a difference.



The deep end was all mine, so I floated around, swam some “half-court” laps, and reveled in the chill. This pool actually had a diving board! I can’t remember the last time I saw one of those at a public pool. Decades ago, the skyrocketing cost of liability insurance had prompted the removal of the ones I knew of. No, I did not use it. Thought about, for maybe a second, but no.

The poor JHS kid had been getting mauled this whole time. What a trooper. He was doing his best to drown his younger male attackers, but he was chivalrous enough to not fight back against the females, and they were relentless. At least once, he had three of them climbing up his shoulders and neck at the same time. His best move to escape the choking was to submerge and try to swim away underwater. But he was sorely outnumbered, and his respites were brief.



That was still going on when I called it quits and went inside for a rinse-off in the shower. You guessed it: no hot water. These Californians fancy their water cold, I reckon.

So, feeling so damn clean that I did not recognize myself, I drove Maxx next door, back to the HH parking lot of the brewery. There were several vehicles there this time, so I had no choice but to pull in within a couple of spaces of others. I de-vanned and pulled my extension cord over to the outlet. The man who had unknowingly shown it to me before was outside his RV and looked at me disapprovingly. "I don't recall seeing 'electricity' in the host's description," he admonished me.



"Yeah, neither did I," I smiled back. "But it's here. Who else would it be for?"

He wanted to snap back, but the logic of my off-the-cuff reply made way too much sense to him. He muttered something about, "well, I'm not going to use it," and went inside his rig.

Suit yourself, chief. I'm staying charged up and cooled off.

Then it was back to the Weed Alehouse & Bistro for supper: a California Chicken panini and a Mountain High IPA (\$25.50, including tip). This time, I brought the laptop in with me and knocked out about 60 Colorado pics.

Then, at closing time, it was off to Blue Maxx (now fan-cooled), more pics, and a good night's sleep. The days were hot, but the nights dropped into the 65-70 range. Niiice.

Monday 2022.08.30

The parking lot was empty when I arose at 11:00. Early birds, I guess. Screw 'em. I don't like worms anyway.



Breakfast was a goner, so I decided to treat myself to a hearty lunch at a nearby place called Pizza Factory. This is a chain of restaurants that can be found all over California (even a tiny town like Weed). Their motto is what attracted me to them: "We Toss 'Em, They're Awesome."

This was not an impulse buy. Back in 1990, on the eastbound leg of that Trans-Canada-Trans-USA roadtrip in, Blighguy and I were headed southeast from Lava Beds when we passed through the medium-sized town of Quincy. Prominent in the middle of it was the colorful sign for the local Pizza Factory.

Blighguy saw the motto and totally cracked up. He could not stop laughing, so we pulled in to grab a bite. The pizza was good, but neither of us were giving it Awesome status.

Still, with that journey – nearly a third of a century ago – in mind, I had to pay the PF another visit.

I'm not sure why, but I went with Baked Lasagna this time. After 12 days of Hot Pockets and such, I expected a **lot**.

It was good, but, ehh, not Awesome. Then again, they hadn't *tossed* it, had they?

Maybe they should say, "We Heat 'Em, Ya Can't Beat 'Em."

Yes, I know, it should be "bake", not just "heat", but I couldn't think of a good rhyme. "We Bake 'Em, Ya Can't Fake 'Em"? Nahhhhh.

So, properly fed, I wheeled Blue Maxx out onto I-5 South. I had another Harvest Host waiting for me down the road about 25 miles away on the outskirts of the town of Mt. Shasta.