



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: 2022.09.08

Pacific Coast Highway, CA – Day 3, Hearst Castle



On Friday – Day 99 of VanLife -- I checked out of the hotel and drove southward, eager to revel in mt favorite road of all, the Pacific Coast Highway.

It quickly became obvious, though, that this would not be a glorious pic day; the fog was persistent, the September sun angle was not as dramatic, and the grasses on the hills were all browned out and dead-looking. So, with the carefree shrug of a man who already has a boatload of good PCH pics, I settled back to just enjoy the ride without constantly stopping to snip-snap.

Soon, I saw a green distance marker sign for Los Angeles and a couple other cities. Attached to the bottom, it had one of those with a brown (NPS color) signs that indicate National Parks and other such properties: "Hearst Castle, 90". Yes! That dog will *definitely* hunt!!



Hearst Castle tour cost \$30. You can't just drive up and walk around. You park in a dauntingly large parking lot, walk into pavilion to purchase your ticket to a guided tour, and get loaded onto a shuttle bus with about 40 other mindless tourons to drive the 10.5-mile, switchback (one big wide one, one small tight one) uphill to the castle compound.

The property covers 250,000 acres (390 square miles), with 14 miles of oceanfront. Casa Grande, the main residence, sits atop Camp Hill at 174 feet above sea level, with a commanding view of the Pacific, which is 3.5 miles away.

Our guide led us through the grounds, past the main house and the Neptune Pool. Then we got to walk through some of the buildings, including the dining hall with the long table, the library with the huge tapestries, the movie theater, the gym, and the indoor pool, which,



we were told, used to be kept "heated" to 75 degrees. Brrr.



William Randolph Hearst launched this project in 1919 – shortly after he inherited \$11M (\$193M in today's money) -- and lived in the Castle from 1925 until 1947.

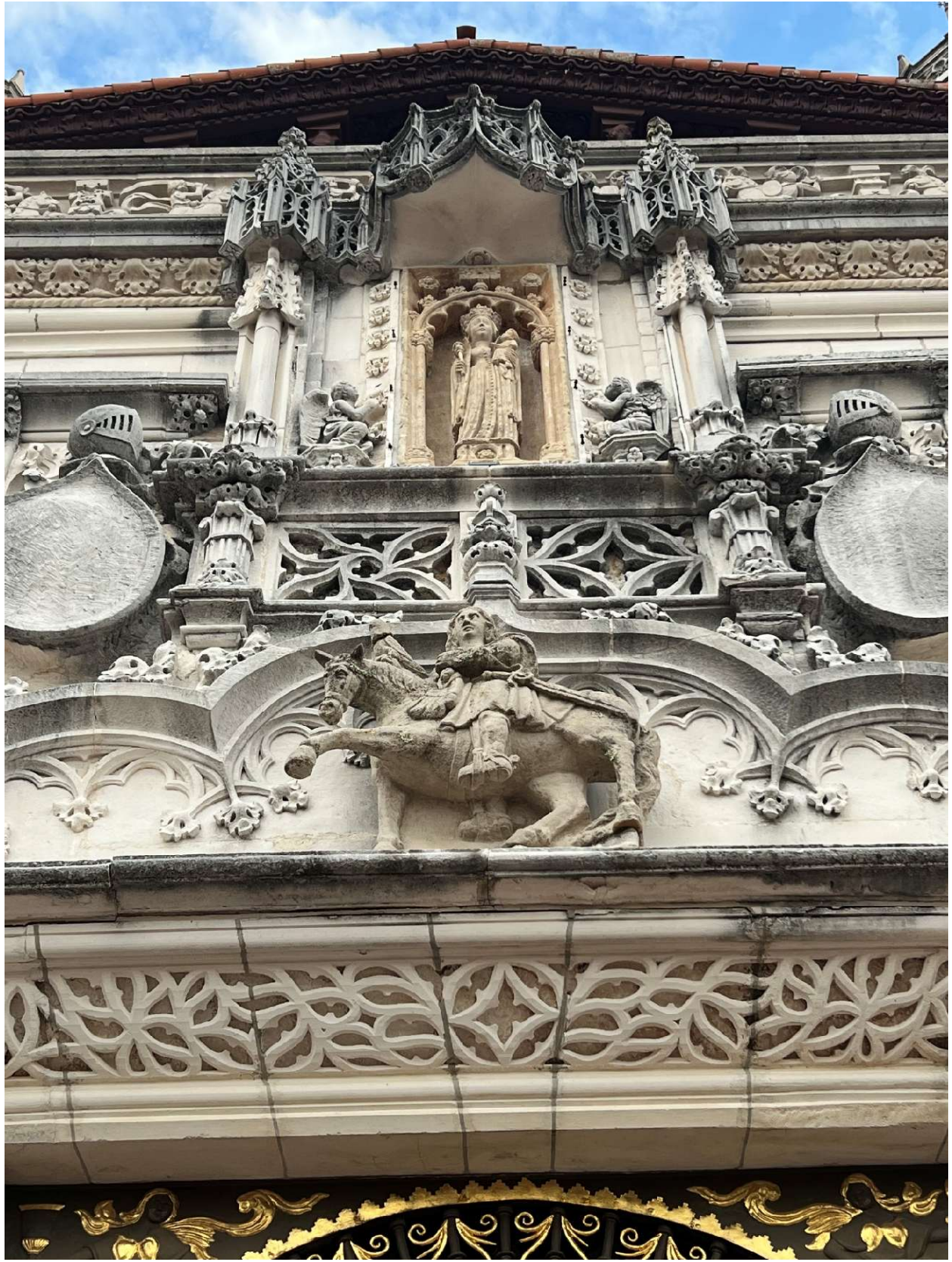
He was the owner of a publishing empire, spent time as a U.S. Senator, and was obsessed with collecting art and pieces of architecture, including rare statues, ceilings, doors, and much more. The plans for the various buildings on the property changed hundreds of times to accommodate new arches or pillars or decorations from Europe or China or wherever. Must have driven the architect nuts.

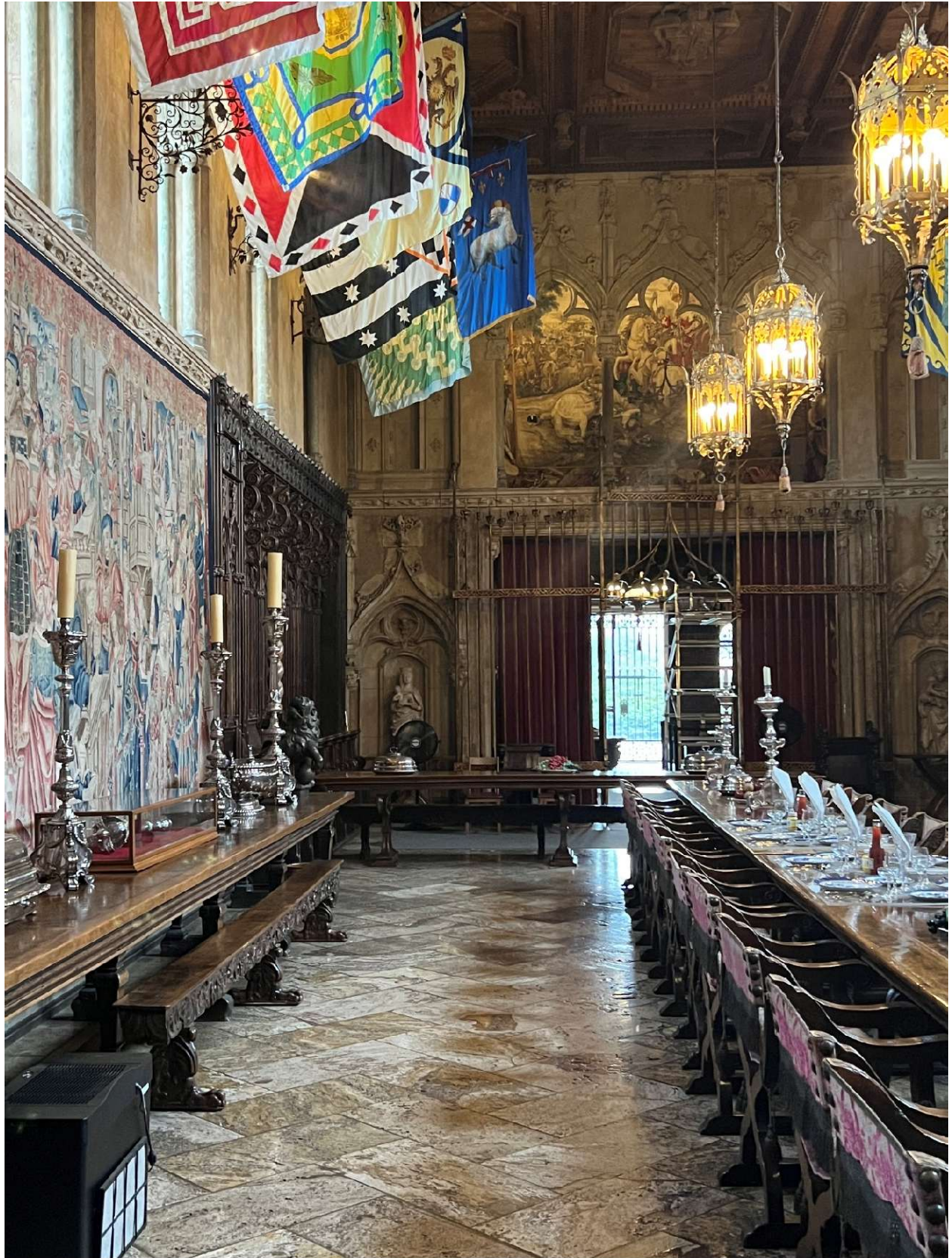
In all, our tour was here for about an hour and a half. Very informative, very interesting, *very* impressive.



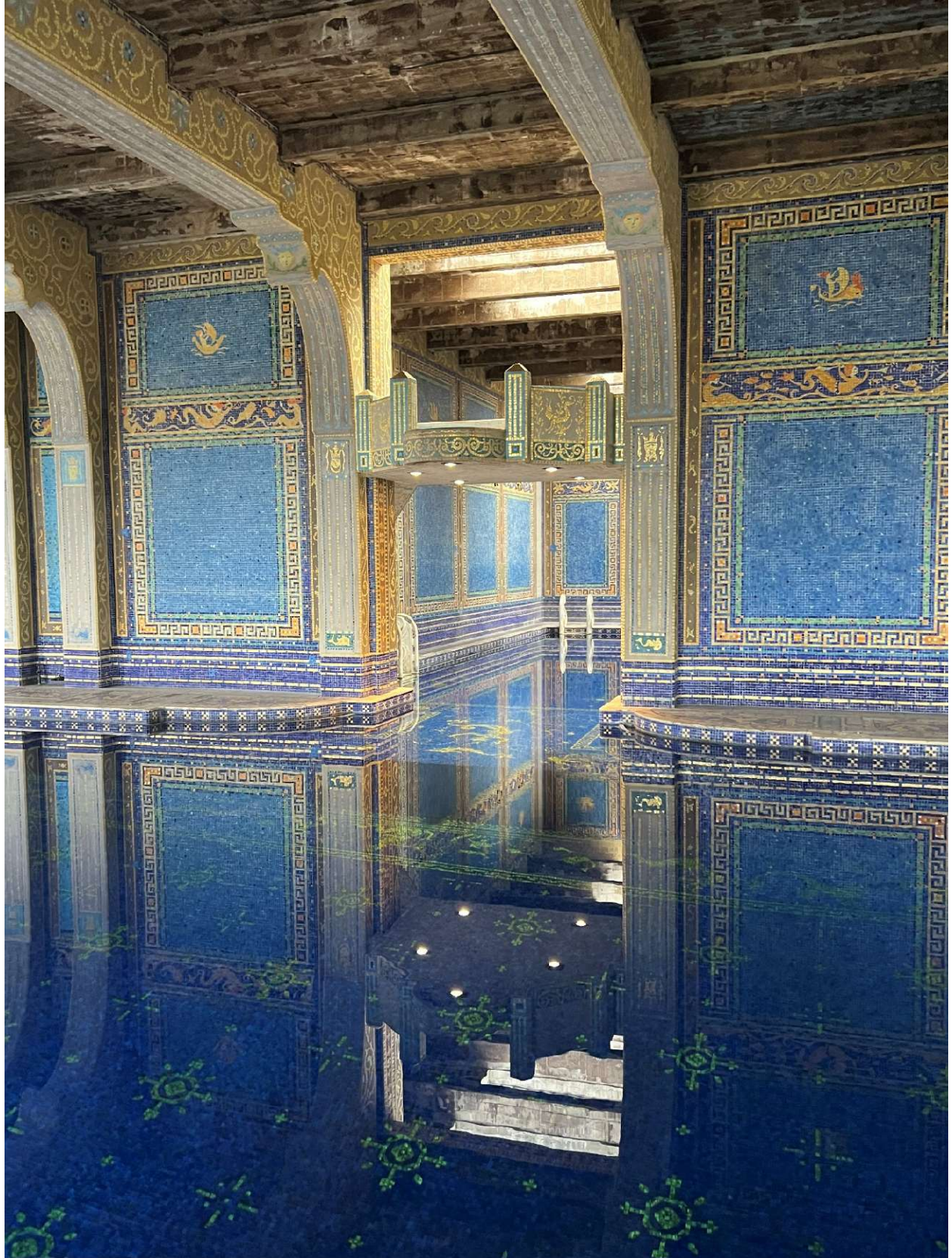












San Simeon was as far south as I'd be going. Los Angeles was not all that far away, but I had a reservation at a campground in Yosemite in two days, so north-then-east was the route of choice.



If this had been July, getting back to Monterrey in daylight would have been cake, but in the second week of September, sunset came a lot earlier. That, of course, meant that I had to navigate the second half of this part of CA-1, with all its curves, twists, and hills – and almost no passing zones – in the dark.

That in itself would not have been bad, cruising along that sweet road. But, with no scenery to see, every other driver was in a big-ass hurry to get through here pronto. I was not crawling; I made sure I was at the speed limit plus a couple. It didn't matter. After dark, this becomes a Grand Prix race, with all of these douchebags trying to prove they can handle the serpentine ribbon of asphalt at 75.

At one point, I caught up with a motorhome going well under the speed limit. I couldn't blame them; parts of the PCH can be tough going in a monster like that. I could see a tight string of about 10 cars close behind me, lights glaring impatiently.

We came around a blind curve and I saw a short opening. Multiple sets of headlights were a short way down a straight stretch of road. He who hesitates gets stuck in traffic, they say, so I gunned Maxx.

For a big box with a six-cylinder, he pounces really well. That motorhome was in my rearview mirror in no time. And, best of all, none of the cars behind me were able to follow me past it. Yeee-haaaa, Maxx!



For several minutes, I watched in the mirror as the long line of white lights fell farther and farther behind. There had been just enough vehicles going the other way to keep that Winnebago impassible.

Then there was a long gap in the oncoming and I knew my jig was up. After a couple more minutes, the blackness in the mirror was stung by white dots, and they were gaining fasst.

This lead pursuer just veered wide and zoomed right by me. Must have been going close to 100. Pissed off much??

The rest of the string came along shortly thereafter. Fortunately, though, as we neared Monterrey, straight stretches became more frequent and, one by one, they went on their way. Happy motoring, ya douchebags!



It was not very late when I got back to Seaside, just north of Monterrey. I planned on sleeping in that hotel parking lot where I had stayed three night before, but I went looking for a nightcap first.

I finished my evening at a place called Post No Bills, a craft beer emporium down a side street in nearby Sand City. I had two yummy Faction Summer IPAs for \$8 each and left a \$3 tip.

It was a nice, very new-looking place, with a good vibe, lots of concert posters on the walls and plenty of brews chilled in the fridge to travel. The tunes were a bit edgy for my tastes, but tolerable. The music will not keep me from becoming a regular here.

Saturday, 10 September 2022, was Day 100 of VanLife. It was a DND (Do Nothing Day).

Before I left that hotel in Seaside, I had something to do. Though I did have a sentimental attachment to Alpi – he was with me for more than two years – I had to say



goodbye. There was no room for two 48-quart reefers in Maxx's belly, especially when only one worked.

There was a dumpster under a tree well behind the hotel. It had a stained mattress, two shabby chairs, a warped table, and a busted TV on the ground beside it. All of them were dead soldiers too.

I wrapped Alpi in Vevor's snug styrofoam packing and clean cardboard carton; at least

he'd be comfortable on his ride to Appliance Heaven. With a nod and a salute, I left him with those other valiant appliances whose lives of service had also been fulfilled. Farewell, old friend!

I went to Planet Fitness, then splurged for a steak-and-cheese at Jersey Mike's, then bickered for quite a while with YouTube about where my "home" was (and eventually just changed it to San Francisco), then bought groceries at Walmart, then fended off a hacker who was trying to get into my laptop while pretending to be YouTube tech support, then did some writing, then processed my Hearst Castle photos.

That's a pretty full slate for a DND. But I had one thing I was very eager to do: my 100-Day Road Stats. I had done a 50-Day Reckoning, and saw that I was waaayyy over budget. So, I needed some affirmation that things were improving.

I got the gas and miles and much of the money stuff done. The Second 50 was very much *within* budget — only about \$36/day for gas, and that was at \$4.88/gallon on average. Numbers Nut that I am, I dig compiling all that stuff. Keeps me from getting too reckless too.

I awoke fairly early on Sunday, 11 September 2022. It was the first day of the NFL season. My Patriots had a 1:00 PM game on the east coast. That meant, of course, that it started at 10 AM out here. 10 AM! How weird is that??

With no chance of watching it on YouTube TV, I needed to get to a Buffalo Wild Wings, or a BJ's, or whatever sports bar they had in Salinas. It would certainly NOT be the featured game. I'll have to beg for a side TV...

I found a Buffalo Wild Wings, but the sign on the door said their Sunday hours began at 11 AM. It was exactly 10:00. I tried the door anyway and it opened.

There were about 20 people in there, most of whom were sitting at tables atching the biggest TVs. There was one woman bartender/server on duty. She certainly would have no trouble handling this crowd.

I saw that one of the screens had New England on it, so I settled in an empty table near it. The barkeep came over to take my order. Too early for a beer, I told her, and ordered a coke and chicken tenders.

This was so weird. How do west coasters do this all the time?

Maybe about half of the patrons were drinking beer. The others, like me, were doing the sobriety thing. What baffled me, though, was that almost everyone was watching the 49ers game. Of course they were; San Francisco was the nearest city.

But why, oh why, were they watching it here? Couldn't they watch it for free at home? Maybe the wife, kids or whoever were not football friendly at this hour? Maybe they were supposed to be somewhere else? Like church, perhaps?? Or maybe it was just the best meeting place for a handful of friends.

The game was over shortly after 1:00. Time to hit the road east!

It was a 3.5-hour drive to my Boondockers Welcome host for the night. Just 45 minutes from Yosemite's west entrance, my host Ken welcomed me to Priest Grade. He was a tad older than me, and he, too, had been an 800 meter runner in high school and college. We reminisced for a good while about when we were fast, and then we called it a night.

Yosemite tomorrow!!!

