



The Muffler Man Tour

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The “WHAT” Tour??

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia...

“Muffler Men”

Muffler Men (or Muffler Man) are large molded fiberglass sculptures that are placed as advertising icons, roadside attractions or for decorative purposes, predominantly in the United States. Standing approximately 18–25 feet tall, the first figure was a Paul Bunyan character designed to hold an axe. Derivatives of that figure were widely used to hold full-sized car mufflers, tires, or other items promoting various roadside businesses.

International Fiberglass of Venice, California constructed most Muffler Men. Two books have been devoted to the distinctive roadside figures and the July 2012 issue of AAA New Mexico Journey devoted its front cover to their 50th anniversary.

While the fiberglass figures are no longer manufactured, many still exist throughout the US with a few in Canada. At least four remain on U.S. Route 66.



So...



With that in mind, and wanting to take a motorcycle trip before the weather turns cold, I planned a route to visit some of the Muffler Men in Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Kansas, and Oklahoma.



They Stand Among Us!



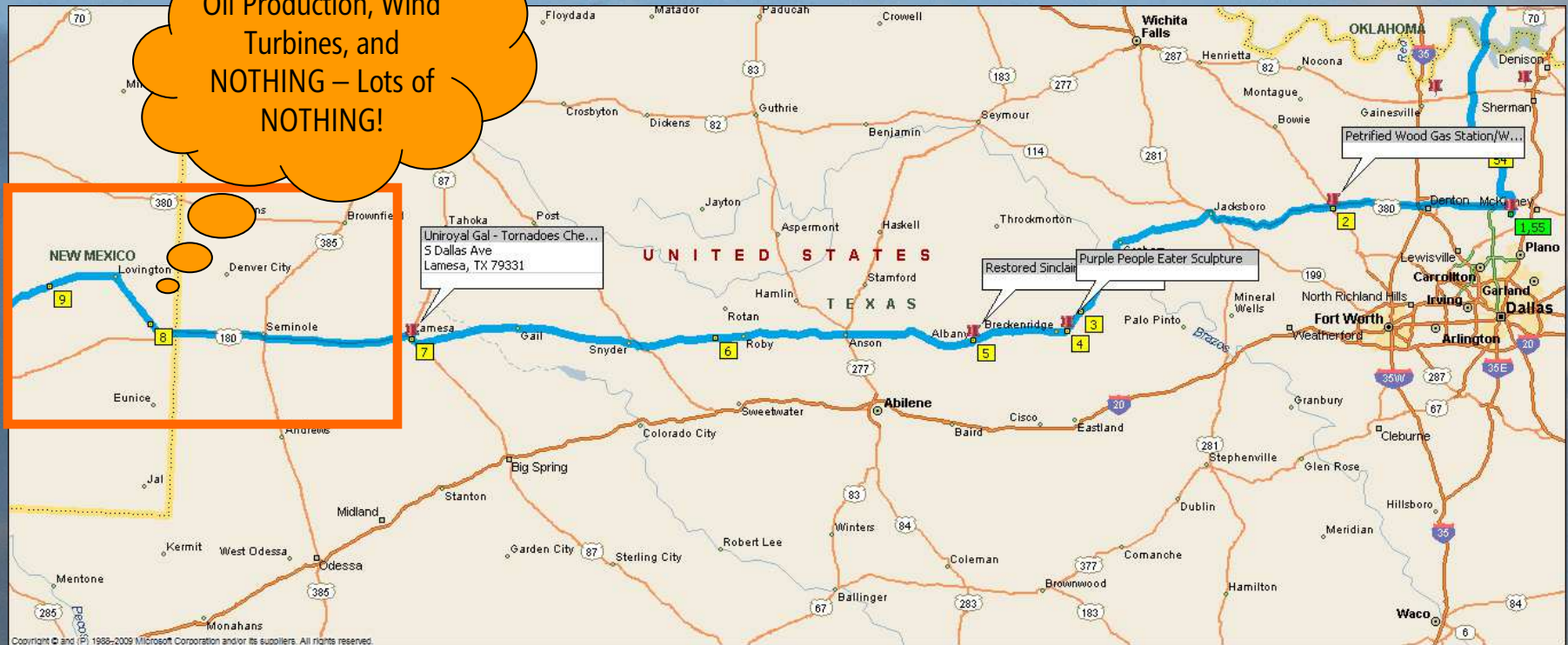
The Route – An Overview

2546 miles (4097 km) Six Days



Day One: Home to Hobbs, New Mexico

Oil Production, Wind Turbines, and NOTHING – Lots of NOTHING!



Petrified Wood Station, Decatur, Texas



Less than 100 miles (160 km) from home, is the “Petrified Wood Station”. This is part of an old “complex” from the 1930’s that was referred to as a “Traveler’s Camp”. Behind the Station and the “Whistle Stop Café” is a small set of old hotel rooms. At one time, there was a room for tent camping as well. So, all in one location, there was everything the weary traveler could need – food, fuel, and lodging.

At some point, the owner of this station decided to cover it entirely in petrified wood.

Herd's Burgers, Jacksboro, Texas



I love a good “Burger Joint”!! To me, a “Burger Joint” should be a bit of a “Greasy Spoon”, it needs to be a “One of a Kind” (no “chains”, please), and it needs to be AT LEAST twenty years old. Let’s face it, anything younger than that is just playing off our nostalgia!

Fortunately, lots of good Burger Joints are still out there, and Herd’s is VERY high on that list. As the name implies, they make Burgers. Yup, that’s it. They will sell you a bag of potato chips, and a bottle of soda, but they make burgers. And, they have been doing it since 1916 (see the sign)! ☺

If you are in or near Jacksboro, make sure you stop in – you might have a hard time finding it, but it will be worth it!

Purple People Eater, Breckenridge, Texas

You know, sometimes, when there is not too much happening, people find ways to amuse themselves!

This “critter” is proof! 😊 I’m not entirely sure what this thing really is, but someone has painted it purple, and put a big face on it. There is actually a hand painted label – mostly covered up by the bushes – that says, “Purple People Eater”.

He could use a new paint job, but it was worth an amusing stop! 😊



Sinclair Gas Station, Albany, Texas



Albany, Texas is a nice little Oasis in the middle of a lot of nothing at all. If you should visit, there is an old drug store in "downtown" that serves decent food, and probably the best malted milkshake I have had in a long time – made with real Blue Bell Ice Cream. Trust me, it puts Sonic to shame!

On the West side of town, is a really neat old restored Sinclair Gas Station.

It is hard to imagine a time when gas stations had such fancy architecture and tin ceilings!



Giant Cow Skull, Albany, Texas

Sharing a small parking lot with the restored Sinclair Gas Station, is a giant cow skull.

Seriously, this thing is as big as a building!! I have no idea why! 😊



Sinclair Gas Station, Snyder, Texas



About 100 miles (160 km) west of Albany, there is another restored Sinclair Gas Station in Snyder, Texas

This one has “everything” – all the old tire balancing equipment, headlight testers, air hoses, and the Sinclair dinosaur.

Sadly, they were NOT selling gasoline for \$0.29 per gallon



Sinclair Gas Station, Snyder, Texas



Sinclair Gas Station, Snyder, Texas



Uniroyal Girl, Lamesa, Texas

As the weather turned a bit unpleasant – it was starting to rain – I arrived in Lamesa, Texas – home of our first “Muffler Man”.

But, WAIT! This isn't a “man”, at all – this is a “Girl”!! How did THAT happen?

Apparently, Uniroyal Tire Company had a series of “girls” that they used for advertising.

Originally, she sported a bikini, but, at some point, prudishness set in, and she now sports a skirt and sweater.

The color scheme and the tornado on her sweater are for the local high school – they are the “Lamesa Tornados”.

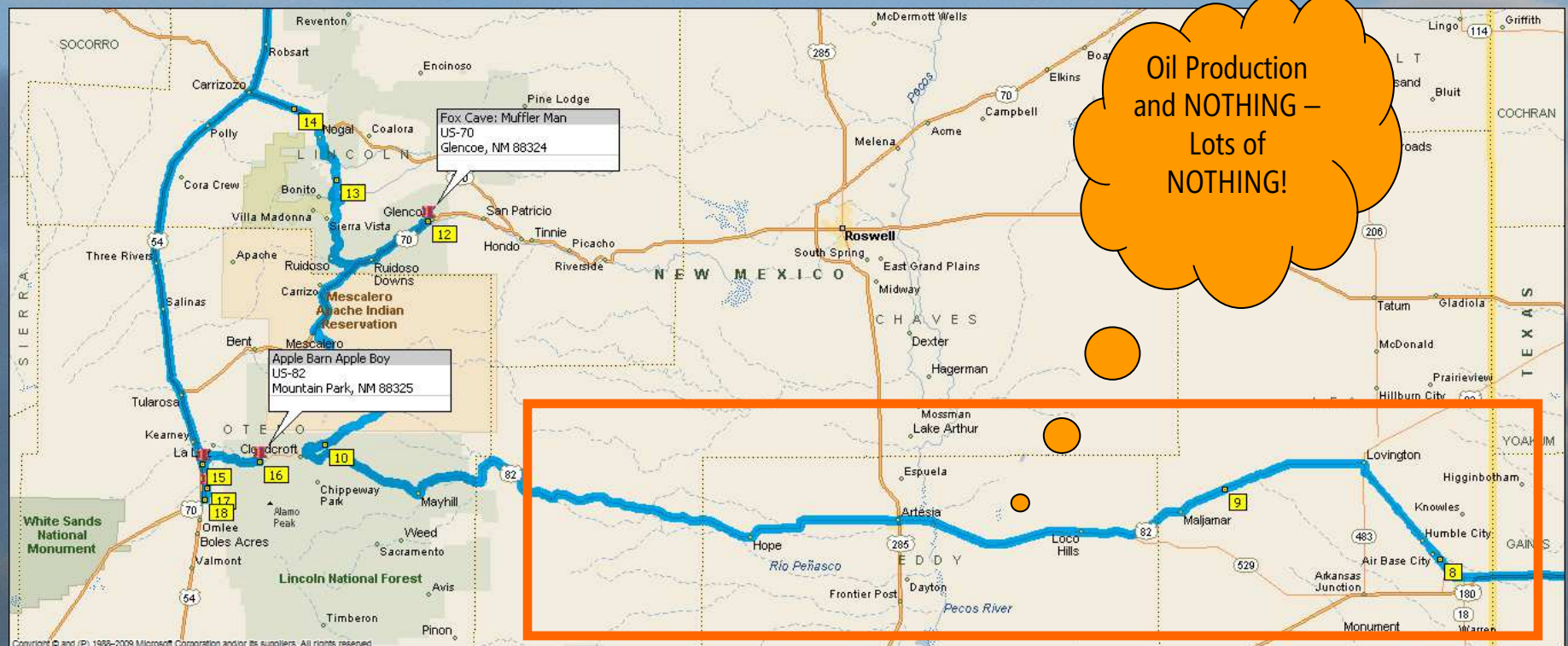
All in all, she could use a new paint job, but she seems to be in good shape.



Uniroyal Girl, Lamesa, Texas



Day Two: Hobbs to Alamogordo, NM



West Texas/ Eastern New Mexico Scenery



Starting somewhere around Lamesa, Texas, and extending at least through Artesia, New Mexico, there is a lot of nothing.

This is a HUGE oil production area, and pump jacks dominate the landscape.

Don't look for cross streets – you won't find them, and white four wheel drive pick up trucks with various company logos on them are everywhere on the roads as they service the oil fields.

With current gasoline prices over \$3.00 per gallon, this area is booming with activity. I have taken a trip through this general area every year for the past five years, and I have never seen it as busy as it is now – new wells being drilled, most all of the existing wells pumping away.

Fox Cave – Ruidoso, New Mexico

Ok, so it's really a bit east of Ruidoso on US-70, but it is a really cool place.

Don't be fooled by Google Maps – it is NOT an escort service!! Apparently some disgruntled former employee did that – although it is hard for me to understand what there is to be disgruntled about!



Fox Cave – Ruidoso, New Mexico



And, this brings us to our first “Muffler Man” for Day Two.

But, wait... THIS is not a “true” muffler man, either! In fact, the face is a character of the owner! I have seen a photo of him, and, I will confirm the “Jay Leno Chin”! 😊

He sounds like an interesting guy, and Fox Cave is a fun place. They have some “tourist stuff”, but the owner is a geologist and a rock hound, so they have a HUGE assortment of fascinating minerals, crystals, and fossils.

Fox Cave – Ruidoso, New Mexico



Old Apple Barn - Cloudcroft, New Mexico

After Fox Cave, I had changed my route a bit to try to avoid some storms coming in from the West.

So, I took a pretty wet, slick, and twisty ride up into the mountains from Alamogordo to visit "Apple Boy" at the Old Apple Barn.

I was hoping to have lunch there, but Hot Dogs were the primary item on the menu. I was kind of tired and wet, so I decided to seek out better options.

As for the Old Apple Barn itself, well just imagine the "shopping area" at Cracker Barrel – only MORE tightly packed with "stuff". If you can picture that, well, then, you've been there already!



Roadrunner – Alamogordo, New Mexico



On the north side of Alamogordo, there is a giant Road Runner sculpture. It appears to be at a metal recycling yard.

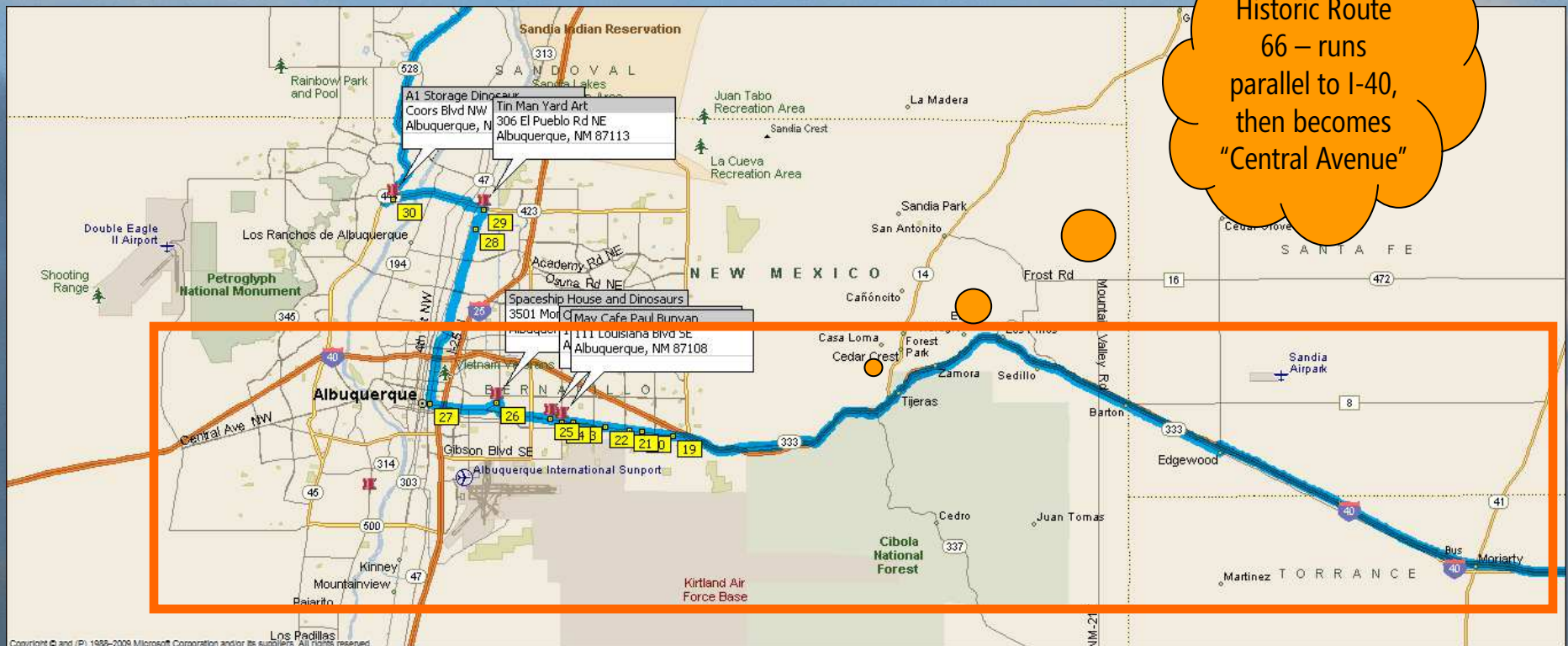
I am fascinated by the things that people (including myself) feel compelled to create.

Day Three – Part One: Alamogordo to Albuquerque



Long,
Lonely
Highway...

Day Three – Albuquerque, New Mexico Detail



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May Café – Albuquerque, New Mexico

At LONG last, I arrived at the first “TRUE” Muffler Man on my trip. This is the “Paul Bunyan” variation – who, when he had arms, would have held an axe.

This poor guy really needs some help!

He is not in the nicest section of town, so I didn't hang around too long.



Dinosaur - Albuquerque, New Mexico



Albuquerque was a major stop on the original Route 66, and it seems to have not developed a whole lot since those days. As a result, it still has a lot of “funkiness”.

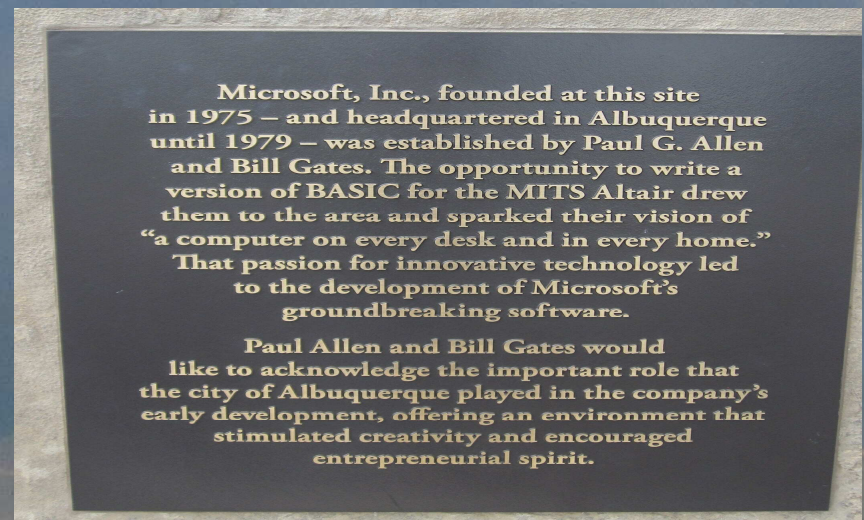
Here we have a giant dinosaur located at the A1 Storage Facility on the north west side of town.

Original Microsoft Headquarters - Albuquerque

What? That **MUST** be a typo – **EVERYONE** knows that Microsoft is headquartered in Seattle, Washington! (well, actually, Redmond, but let's not get picky!).

YES – it is **TRUE!** Microsoft was **ORIGINALLY** founded in this **INCREDIBLY** humble office building in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Who would believe it! Trust me, the building is **HUMBLE!**



Spaceship House - Albuquerque



I am not sure what is more amazing – the fact that this is someone's home, or the fact that it is in downtown Albuquerque!

Zoning regulations would probably prevent something like this today, but it is really cool.

Albuquerque must have been a neat place to be in the 50's and 60's.

Tin Man Yard Art - Albuquerque

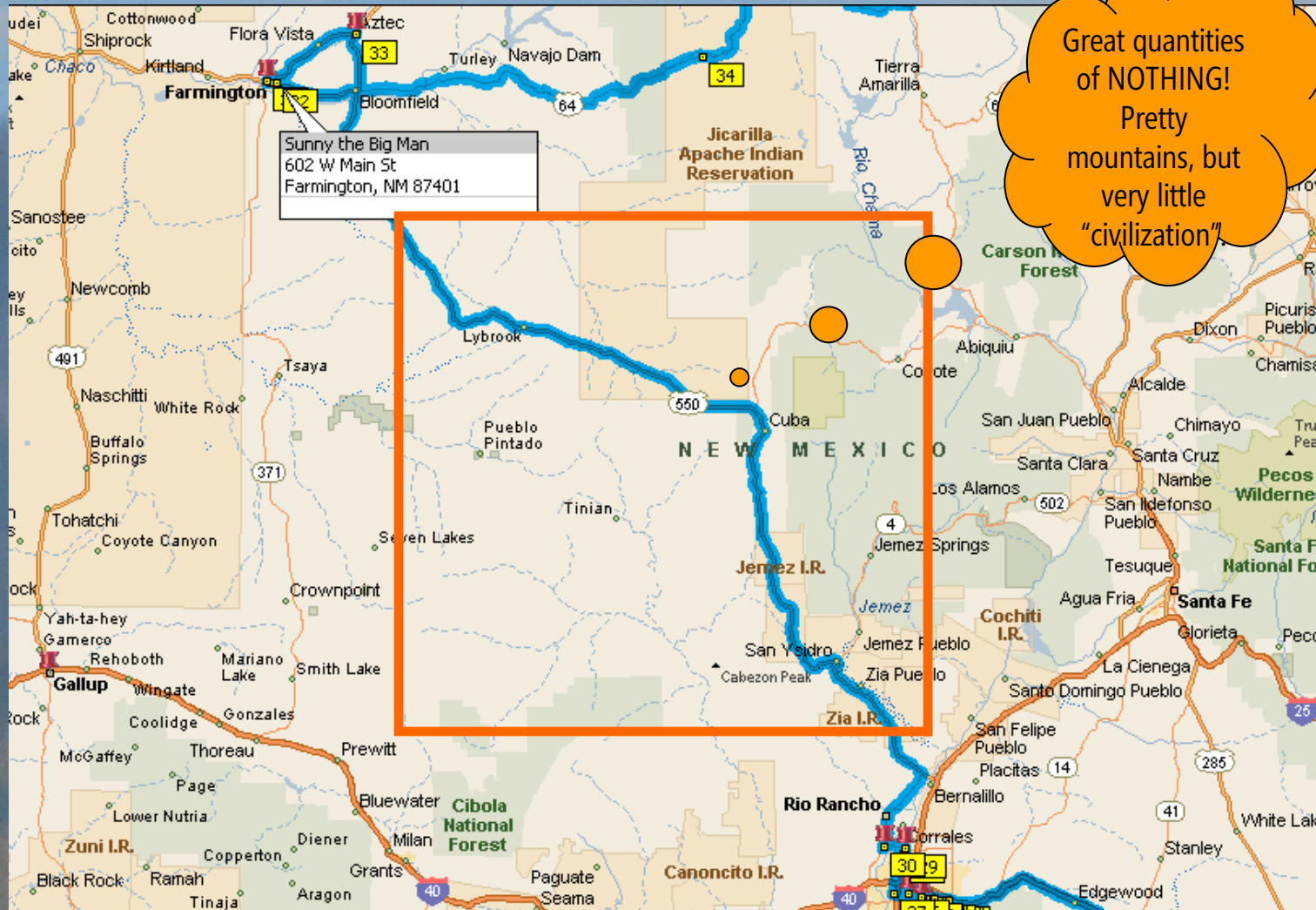
More fun, funkiness in Albuquerque!

This guy apparently likes to make things from tin.

He's in a residential area, right across from a retirement home. I am sure that there are some city planners out there that hope he passes on soon so that they can "clean up" all this stuff!



Day Three – Part Two: Albuquerque to Farmington, NM



Sunny – Farmington, New Mexico



They call him “Sunny the Big Man”, and he is outside of “Sun Glass” in Farmington, New Mexico.

Notice his “glasses”! 😊

By far, he is the most well maintained “Muffler Man” that I saw on my trip.

I think the guy watering the trees in the bank parking lot (where I took the photo) was pretty sure I was crazy or otherwise deranged! 😊

Sunny – Farmington, New Mexico



Juxtaposition – Farmington, New Mexico

Juxtapose: [juhk-stuh-pohz,
juhk-stuh-pohz]

verb (used with object),
juxtaposed, juxtaposing.

“to place close together or
side by side, especially for
comparison or contrast.”

Ok, I am sorry, but I found
this hysterically funny!
And, no, it is not
“photoshopped”!!



Day Four – Farmington to Colorado Springs, Colorado



Farmington, to Colorado Springs, Colorado



Sometimes, you just have to be flexible. Rolling into Farmington the night before, the weather was looking pretty threatening. Forecasts for my ride through Colorado were calling for “SEVERE Thunderstorms” to include such fun things as “hail” and “high winds” and “heavy rains”. So, I altered my route to cut through the slightly lower elevations of northern New Mexico instead of the higher elevations of Southern Colorado.

I got absolutely POURED on (think fire hose) for about fifteen minutes in Bloomfield, New Mexico. It was so strange to come down into the valley, and actually SEE the storm sitting there waiting for me! Since there was nowhere else to go, and no where to pull off, there was no choice but to press on.

After that deluge, it rained off an on the rest of the day, but nothing serious – and NO hail! 😊

As a bonus, the Aspens were changing colors in the mountains. As always, a photo can not capture the brilliance of these trees, but, even with overcast skies, they were beautiful.

Cumbres & Toltec – Chama, New Mexico



I happen to really like trains – especially old ones. Lucky for me, I was rolling through Chama, New Mexico, just as the once daily Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railway train was making its 10:00 departure.

All traffic stopped while it crossed the road. I got a neat video of it “rolling through”. It’s hard to imagine a time when this was “State of the Art” Transportation.

My route went up through the same valleys, gorges, and passes as the train tracks, and let me just say that these passengers were in for a scenic treat!

Aspens – Near Cumbres Pass, Colorado



Yeah, ok, I was wet from the rain in Bloomfield. And, yes, I was cold – it got down to 42, and never got above 52. And, yes, those ARE clouds touching the mountains (and me). But, seriously – look how beautiful the aspens are! I got REALLY lucky on my timing – but more on that later.

Aspens –Colorado Route 17



Rainbows - Colorado



As much as I could have lived without the rain, I saw some of the MOST incredible rainbows of my life!

Just north of Bloomfield, I saw a VERY vivid double rainbow, but there was nowhere to pull over, and the rain was coming.

I got a chance to take a picture of this one on the outskirts of Colorado Springs.

Re-Routing Follow Up

As a result of changing my route, I felt pretty lucky to see the train crossing the road, and to enjoy the Aspens turning colors.

The following slide is a series of photos sent to me from a Ski Shop.

These photos were taken in the area I originally planned to travel, LESS than 36 hours after I passed through.

Did I mention that I was on a motorcycle?

Re-Routing Follow Up



Colorado Springs, Colorado

After a rainy, cloudy, cold trip across the Rockies, I was happy to find myself in sunny, warm Colorado Springs, Colorado.

It seems like a cool town, and I would be interested in spending some time there at some point.

I don't know the meaning of this, but, downtown, some of the buildings have interesting "appendages" ...



Colorado Springs, Colorado



Colorado Springs, Colorado



Rattlesnake Saloon, Colorado Springs



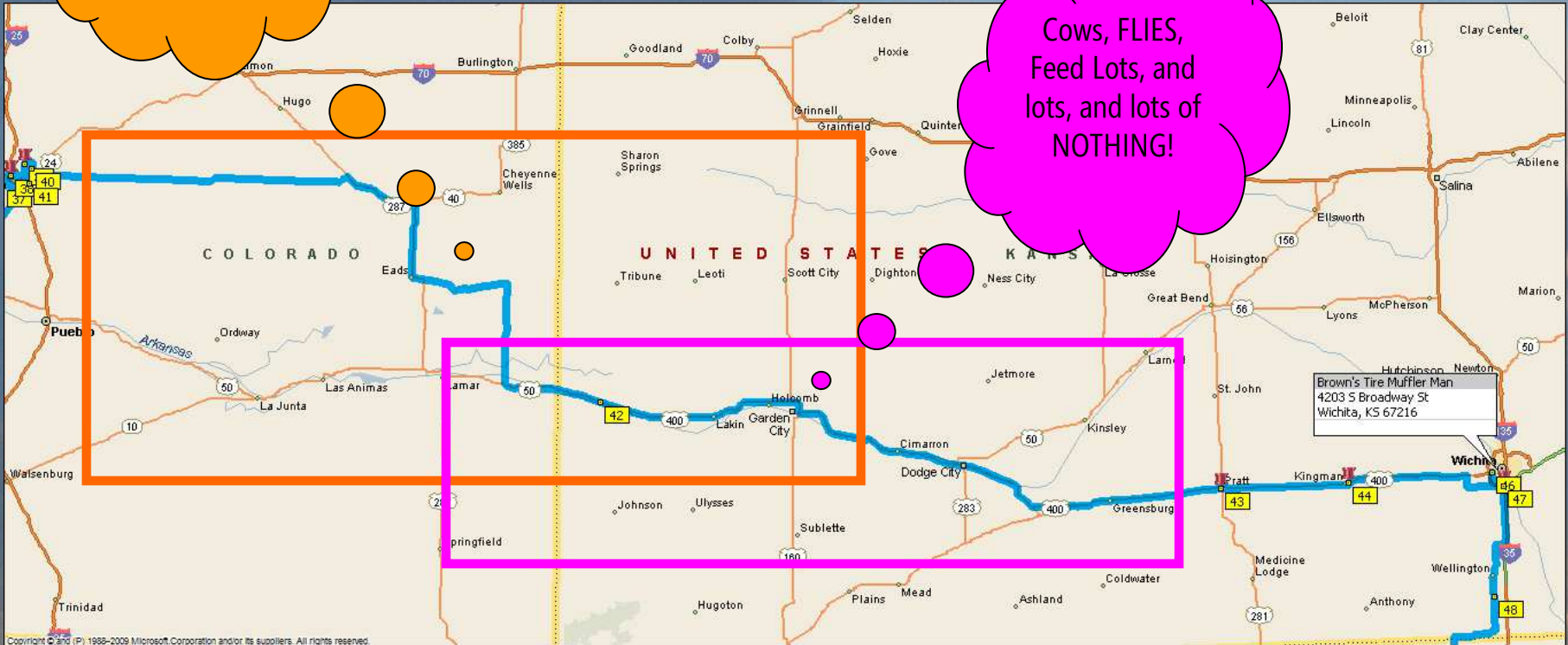
And, at the end of a long day, I found this guy – hanging out at the Rattlesnake Saloon!

I'm pretty sure that he's custom made, and not an original "Muffler Man", but I was too tired to argue at this point! 😊

Day Five – Colorado Springs, Colorado to Wichita, Kansas

One of the
Flatest, most
BORING parts of
Planet Earth!

Cows, FLIES,
Feed Lots, and
lots, and lots of
NOTHING!



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Sunrise - Colorado Springs



It was a beautiful morning in Colorado Springs. With the Rockies to the West, sunrise was especially wonderful. This was the scenic highlight of the entire day! Eastern Colorado, and Western Kansas must be some of the flattest, most boring places on Planet Earth!

When "civilization" was encountered, it was all cattle feed lots. The gas stations had fly traps about every three feet outside, and the flies were still nothing short of oppressive.

If you are ever in the area, I would encourage you to find a way to be somewhere else! 😊 The GOOD news is that it made Oklahoma seem REALLY interesting!

Kansas – I spent a week there one day....

M.T. Liggett's Sculptures – Mullinville, Kansas

Anywhere else, I would not have even bothered to stop to look at something like this. But, after driving through HOURS of nothing, when this “stuff” pops up out of nowhere, curiosity takes over!

If you're really interested, check out this link:
<http://www.roadsideamerica.com/story/11212>



Gorillas – Wichita, Kansas



Gorillas – what do you mean, “Gorillas”?

Well, I don’t know why, but this HVAC Company had these two gorillas in hard hats lining their front entrance.

Frankly, it gives me joy that there is still so much “weird” out there – Gorillas in hard hats...

Brown's Tire Muffler Man – Wichita, Kansas



**And, the star of our day –
the Brown's Tire Muffler
Man!**

**Yes, he could use a new
paint job. And, no, he is
NOT in a Beverly Hills
address!**

**After a long boring day, I
was happy to see him. He
seemed a bit indifferent
about me.**

Wichita Rorschach Test

This was the painting in the bathroom at the hotel.

In the evening, I saw a vase with some flowers sticking out of it.

In the morning, it looked, well, VERY different to me.

What do YOU see?

Come on, be honest about it...



Day Six – Wichita, Kansas to Home



Bud's Cycle Salvage – Aline, Oklahoma



The weather was looking pretty stormy (again) this morning. But, with a slight detour into the ugliness, I was able to find our "Man" at Bud's.

He's pretty far off the road – can you see him?

Bud's Cycle Salvage – Aline, Oklahoma



Bud's Muffler Man is also the Paul Bunyan variation – complete with arm AND an axe!

He looks like he could use a paint job, but, all in all, he seems to be in pretty good shape.

He was pretty far off the road. I should have gone into the shop and asked for a closer view, but I wasn't too sure how long the weather would hold out.

Strangeness on the Oklahoma Road

Every once in a while, I see things that I am not sure I have seen. Sometimes, I KEEP seeing them, and I become a little (but only a little) more sure!

Somewhere south of Enid, Oklahoma, on US-81, I kept seeing these cars, headed North, and “painted up” – like Nascar Cars on the track – logos and sponsors and such. I was finally able to catch a solid glimpse of one, and it said “Official Competitor – Fireball Run”.

So, I looked it up when I got home. Pretty amusing that their adventure started a mere few miles from my house! Here’s some more info if you’re interested:

<http://www.dallasnews.com/news/community-news/frisco/headlines/20140516-frisco-chosen-as-starting-line-for-this-years-fireball-run.ece>

<http://www.dallasnews.com/news/community-news/frisco/headlines/20140925-frisco-serves-as-starting-line-for-fireball-run-online-reality-show.ece>

<http://www.fireballrun.com/>

Steppin' Out – Wynnewood, Oklahoma



Located outside a Western store, just off Interstate 35 and Oklahoma Route 29, is the last of the Muffler Men on my tour.

This guy is the “cowboy” variety, and he is in pretty good shape.

They have a bunch of other stuff outside around the store, too.

Steppin' Out – Wynnewood, Oklahoma



Future Muffler Man Visits

I learned that there are actually **THREE** "Muffler Men" right here in Dallas. Two of them are the "Happy Idiot" variety, and one of those is located at a shop where I have had work performed on my truck.

There is also a "village" of "Muffler Men" in Gainesville, Texas (about an hour from my home) – called "Glenn Goode's Big People". Not only does Glenn have a Uniroyal Girl – he **ALSO** has a "Big John" – you may have seen them – they were designed to "hug" a big roll of carpet.

Future day trips for sure...

Check it out here:

<http://www.roadsideamerica.com/story/7362>

Random Thoughts

I really was just looking for an excuse to take a trip, and I came across the “Muffler Man” thing on the Roadside America website (one of my favorites for road trips, so check it out).

I am ABSOLUTELY fascinated at how many people have an interest in these things. And, I think that may be true of almost anything.

Take an interest in SOMETHING – anything – and see where it leads you. Look into it a little more than just the surface. See where it takes you and think about the people you meet – whether in real life or “virtually”

In the end, it seems we are all way more connected than it may sometimes feel.

Additional Information

When I got home, I was doing just a little research online to see if I could get a brief historical synopsis of the Muffler Man Phenomena. MUCH to my surprise, there are MANY people out there, MUCH more interested in the Muffler Men than I. If you are interested, please visit the following websites:

<http://www.route-66.tv/muffler-men-route66.html>

<http://www.usagiants.com/>

<http://www.roadsideamerica.com/map/theme/86>

<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1335364893/the-mortons-gap-muffler-man-restoration-project>